Christian Doctrines and Duties explained and recommended;

IN

FORTY SERMONS

Preached in the PARISH CHURCHES

O F

St. Andrew Undershaft,

AND

Allhallows the Great:

And Divers of them,

In Eton College Chapel, and other Places.

In TWO VOLUMES.

By WILLIAM BERRIMAN, D. D.

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SERMON I.

The Folly and Danger of denying a PROVIDENCE.

ZEPH. i. xii.

And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search ferusalem with candles, and punish the men that are setled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will be do evil.

HE good impressions which Hezekiah's SERM. Piety had left upon the minds of his people, were eafily worn out by the influence and ill example of his Successors. Such were the Corruptions that crept in among them, both in Faith and Practice; to univerfally had the Contagion spread, so deeply had they fuck'd the Poison, and so much was its Malignity confirm'd by time, that some Expositors have thought, 'fosiab's commendable Zeal was not able to finish the Reformation he began: for that even in his Reign, they were still ripe for Vengeance; and this Prophet Zepbany was sent to foretell the Captivity of the Fews, by Nebuchadnez: ar King of Babylon, in punishment of their abominable Sins.

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But whether we approve of this Conjecture SERM. or no; whether we suppose Josiah's pious Endeavours to have been thus entirely defeated; or rather, that this Prophecy was deliver'd in the beginning of his Reign, before he had time to proceed far in his Reformation; it may be prefumed, however, that the Sins, to which it threatens Vengeance, owed their Rife and Confirmation to Manasseb's Impiety; against which the same Captivity had elsewhere been denounc'd. And among the acts of Vengeance threatened at the time of that Captivity, is That of the Text; which I have chosen for the Subject of our present Meditations. It shall come to pass at that time, that I will fearch Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are setled on their lees; that fay in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will be do evil.

By fearching with candles, undoubtedly is meant, that exact Account, which God would take, of the most secret Sinners in ferusalem; in order to bring on them the just Judgment and Punishment of their Impiety. For as candles are used, in examining the darkest and most private corners; and the Woman therefore in the Parable, that had lost the piece of money, is said to have light a candle and sought diligently till she found it; so God, (who sees all things, that are done in the privatest retirements, and from whom nothing in nature can possibly be hid) is pleased to express

his universal Knowledge by such Phrases, as SERM. are used to signify the harrowest and most exact search, by fearching the very hearts and reins; by searching with candles, and the like.

And from hence, therefore, in the Book of Proverbs it is said, the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly *; to signify, among other things, that Almighty God is as intimately acquainted with every man, as his own Spirit is. Thus God knew the state of these fews; and the consequence of this Knowledge, as it follows, would be their Punishment.

In discoursing farther from the words, I

shall do these two things.

I. I shall consider the Character of the persons, against whom this Prophecy is denounc'd.

II. I shall shew the Vanity of that Principle, upon which they proceeded.

I. First, I shall consider the Character of the persons, against whom this Prophecy is denounced. And in That, there are two things proper to be observ'd, viz.

1. The State or Condition of the men: they

are here faid to be fettled on their lees.

2. The Principle upon which it was founded: they faid in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

* Prov. xx. 27.

B 2

1. First,

SERM. I. First, the State or Condition of the men, I. who are here said to be settled on their less.

In times of Prosperity and Peace, when all things run smooth and easy, and Religion is fashionable as well as good; it is then difficult for us to distinguish between the truly pious and the formal Hypocrite. For all we have to judge by, lies in outside appearance; whereas true Religion must be grounded in the heart, and have its spring and principle within. The form of Godliness may be put on upon secular motives; for the sake of Riches or Honours; to infinuate into men's Affections; to gain Applause and Reputation; as well as from a real sense of Duty and Obedience to God.

Now whichever be the Principle, the Appearance is the fame, all clear and ferene; and fuch as ought indeed, by the rules of Charity, to be judg'd honest and fincere. But alas! many times it is but as wine fettled on the lees, which, however bright it may appear, is yet at bottom foul and muddy; and very different from that appearance. Nay, and as That too, upon a flight motion, will be foul'd and disorder'd with its own sediment; so these men, when persecution ariseth for the word's sake, by and by they are offended. Alas! they cannot bear the shock of Persecution, or other outward inconvenience: it stirs up, and betrays the foulness of their minds; and, separating Religion from their worldly

worldly interest, it pulls off their plausible SERM. disguise, and leaves them to follow, where I. Affection leads.

This might perhaps be the temper of those men, who are faid here, in the Text, to be fettled on their lees: and the rather, because the wicked Principle which follows, is fuch, as they are faid not to profess openly; but to fay, or conceive only in their heart. had not yet arrived at fuch a flagrant pitch of Wickedness, as publickly to deny God's Providence, and Government of the world. No; They were more like wine fettled on the lees: they bore a fair shew of Religion; they appear'd the Servants and Worshippers of God: but at bottom they were foul and impious; as a little trial in the tempest of Adversity would quickly testify, by stirring up the dregs of Vice that lay conceal'd; and fo proving all their pompous shew of Virtue to be meer Diffimulation and Hypocrify.

This Sense (I say) the Phrase may bear. But as the settlement of any liquor upon its lees, must be the work of time, and argues it to have been kept still and quiet: So when men are said to have settled on their lees, this may have no regard to any bright appearance, or shew they make of Virtue; but rather to their thoughtless and indolent security, arising from that calm and easy state of life they have enjoy'd, without being toss'd up and down by adverse and unfortunate Events. Thus

SERM. 'tis plainly taken by the Prophet Feremy. Moab (fays he) bath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from veffel to veffel, neither hath be gone into captivity *. But then let us remember, it is not every state of Prosperity, that is properly express'd by this Metaphor. It is not so when men receive it as a Bleffing, and improve it accordingly, to virtuous purposes. But it is when they make it an occasion of stupid security in Sin; when they dread no Punishment, because they feel no Smart: but are willing to flatter themselves with a full license to fin; so long as they see it attended with no present inconvenience. This was the case of Moab in the Prophet Teremy. Therefore (fays he) his tafte remained in bim, and bis scent is not changed. His present ease and safety, made him thoughtless and supine; going on still, and perfifting in his old Abominations, without once reflecting on the evil of his ways.

And this too (I believe I may venture to add) was the case of the Jews, in the time of Zephany. Long Peace and Tranquillity had they enjoy'd; which, instead of producing its due effects of Love and Gratitude towards God, had made them stupidly profane and irreligious. And if Josiah's pious care had brought them, to a little better outward face of Religion than they had before; yet still they

* Jer. xlviii. 11.

continued Atheists or Epicures within; they SERM. denied God's Providence, and Government I. of the world; believed there would be no reward of virtuous actions, and expected no punishment to be inflicted upon Sinners. For this we shall find in the

2. Second place, to be the meaning of that Principle, upon which they founded their fecurity; they faid in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will be do evil. By which they could not mean, that God can do nothing at all, neither perform fuch actions as are good, nor do any thing that is base and finful. (The latter of these would have been readily confess'd, the commission of Sin being wholly inconfistent with the Divine Purity: and the former no one ever yet has ventured to affert.) But they meant, that God does not concern himself about the actions of men, either to punish or reward them; that he will neither do good to good men, nor inflict evil upon bad, but leave them to act even as they lift; without any danger of Punishment on one hand, or reasonable prospect of Advantage on the other. 'Tis thus, the Prophet Isaiab upbraids the Heathen Idols, with their inability to execute Rewards or Punishments. -Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea do good or do evil, that we may be difmay'd and behold it together *. So that this their Prin-

* Isaiah. xli. 23.

SERM ciple was a flat denial of Divine Providence,

I. which takes off all effectual restraint of human actions, and destroys all virtuous Prin-

ciples and Practices together.

Such has fometimes been the madness of men arising either from absurd Theories of the Divine nature; which they suppose (if not incapable of attending to such vast variety of Events, at least) too highly exalted above this lower world, to be concern'd at all about such trisles as are acted in it: or else from unjust observations upon the Government of the world; in which, they conclude, things could never be manag'd as they are; Vice so often go unpunish'd, and Virtue so often unrewarded; if all Events were ordered and disposed, by a just and wise, a holy and a gracious God.

The last of these seems to have been the ground of the Error of those mentioned in the Text. They had hitherto been calm and quiet, and they were settled on their lees: they expected no molestation or disturbance in their Wickedness; but from their present Ease and Prosperity, were led to conclude, that God regarded not the actions of men; and therefore would neither do them good for their Virtues, nor evil for their Sins. For which reason he here threatens them, that he would be sure to execute the Severities they did not fear; that he would even search ferusalem with candles, to find out the most secret

fecret Sinners, and punish the men that were SERM. thus fettled on their less. Which leads me I. in order to the other Head proposed, namely,

II. Secondly, The Vanity of that Principle upon which they proceeded; the Vanity of all fuch wicked Impeachments of Divine Providence. And this (I judge) will fufficiently appear from those Arguments which may be urged, to prove an overruling Providence, that governs the world, that dispenses Rewards to Virtue, and Punishments to Sin; and are briefly, for method sake, reduced to these three forts; namely, such as are drawn from Authority, Reason, and Experience. And

1. First then, for Authority; we have the general Consent of all Sects and Parties of men, that have acknowledged a Deity, except the Epicureans, on the fide of Providence. And the Epicureans, for denying it, have been censured commonly as Atheists, as in effect disowning the Existence of a God; however they acknowledged it in words. Upon this Principle were founded all those Sacrifices and Prayers, that were defigned either to appeale the anger, or implore the favour of the gods, or else to thank them for Bleffings formerly bestow'd. Which had all been vain and useless, had their Worshippers believ'd them unconcern'd at what is done below; unable to hear, or hearing to affift; whom they needed neither be afraid to provoke,

SERM. voke, nor ambitious to please. Nay, so

I. thoroughly have men been persuaded, that
this world is under the Government of a superior Being; that many have run into an
extream this way, and been led from hence
to conclude an absolute Fatality of all Events,
and deny the Liberty of human actions.

I would build no more on this Confession of the heathen world, than we do usually on their acknowledgment of the Being of a God; not that all their notions of his Government were right, (for they were widely different and inconsistent with each other) but that the certainty of his Government in general is so clearly deducible from the most natural and obvious Principles, that it extorted their assent, by its own Light and Evidence; and however they differ d as to the manner, they were agreed as to the thing.

From them, if we come to Revelation, the holy Scriptures are full of Expressions of this nature. To God they ascribe the Government of all Causes, whether natural, fortuitous, or moral; the disposal and ordering of all Events, and particularly with reference to the case before us, the assigning to Virtue and Vice respectively, their several Rewards and Punishments. Twere endless to reckon up the instances of this kind. Let it suffice to say, that the whole Scheme of our Religion is built upon this very supposition. For whence proceed the Promises and Threat-

nings

nings in Scripture, but from God's love of SERM. Virtue, and hatred against Sin; from his firm purpose of rewarding the one, and punishing the other? What need of a SAVIOUR to redeem us from his wrath; if no offences of ours were able to provoke him? or, what need of Prayers thro' that Saviour's Merits; if he were no way concern'd at any thing we do? What need, again, of Laws to regulate our Actions; if God regarded not their Regulation? Or, what use of Sanctions to enforce those Laws; if they were to stand as Cyphers only, and be never executed? So that he, who will subscribe to Christian Principles, must own, in this instance at least, the Care and Government of Providence. And as for the profane and irreligious, they ought to own it too; when they urge the unequal Diftributions in this life, as an objection against the Justice, Goodness, or Holiness of God. For objections of this kind must proceed upon the supposition of God's governing the world; and can have no force at all, unless he be actually concern'd in those objected Distributions. But enough has already been argued from Authority.

2. Secondly, the same will appear likewise, to be the voice of Reason. For as the world has no Principle of Subsistence in itself; but owes its being to some prior and superior Cause; so the same must be concern'd for the preserving and ordering it still. Chance can I. it could make it at the first. And therefore if we allow God to have been the Maker of beaven and earth, we must allow him to govern and direct them still. If no Power, less than infinite, could produce such vast variety of marvellous Effects as we see, in this visible creation; the same must be required afterwards, to supervise and order them, without Error and Consusion.

Thus far we may argue, from the nature of things, for God's Government in general. And then more particularly, for the distribution of Rewards and Punishments, we argue from the nature of God; that a Being of infinite Wisdom, Justice, Holiness and Goodness, cannot but be concern'd for the advancement of Virtue, and posses'd of a just hatred and abhorrence of Sin; and therefore cannot but propose such Encouragements to the one, and Discouragements from the other, as may best answer the just Ends of righteous Government, and be sufficient motives for a rational creature to govern himself by.

And this indeed is so plain a Principle of Reason, that they who have deny'd the Government of Providence, have usually sounded their opinion on a mistaken notion of God's not knowing the things that are done upon the earth; and being placed in a state above taking notice or regard of them. Thus the Epicureans in particular, represented their deities

deities as a lazy and unactive kind of Beings, SERM. whose Happiness consisted in the profoundest ease and filence; and could not bear to be difturb'd with the observation and care of this tumultuous world. And fo the wicked, in the Pfalmist's days, faid in their beart, God bath forgotten, he hideth away his face, and he will never fee it *. Again, they fay, how doth God know? and is their knowledge in the most High +? The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it | Such reverence they had for the Divine Majesty, that they chose to make God ignorant, rather than unjust; and thereby tacitly confess'd, that if his Perfections could be prov'd fuch as they are commonly believ'd to be; if he has both Knowledge to perceive the actions of men, and Power to punish or reward them; there could be then no longer doubt, but he would deal with them according to the exact rules of unbounded Goodness and unspotted Purity, unbiass'd Justice, and unerring Wisdom.

But as the Psalmist urges, in answer to such persons, He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall not be correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. To suppose the Creator and sirst Cause of all things not

I. an absurdity, as to suppose a creature that is possess'd of them. For whatever Perfections are in all creatures dispersed throughout the world, must have been first collectively, and transcendently in that Cause, from which they are derived. So that they are but Rays (as it were) of the Creator's Power and Excellence, and must continue always under

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his Cognizance, and immediate Direction. 3. Thirdly, What is thus supported by Authority, and enforced by Principles of Reason, is no less visibly confirm'd, in the last place, by every day's Experience. For when we observe, how artfully all things are contrived, for the furtherance of the common Good; how admirably all the parts of the creation are adapted to the purposes of their respective natures, and made in a proper manner to contribute to the fervice of each other; how regularly Times and Seasons in fuccession take their places, and the influences of the heavens (by their proper revolutions) serve to produce the fruits of the earth, and make the climate healthy; nay laftly, when any thing feems irregular, and out of course, how even That is made subservient to wife defigns: When we observe all this, he must be a man, I say, not only of inexcusable Perverseness, but even of shameless Impudence, that shall ascribe such things to the management of Fortune and blind Chance, Chance, as could not have been better di-SERM. rected by the most perfect and consummate I. Wisdom.

And if these considerations convince us of the Sovereignty and Government of Providence; a little farther observation will vindicate the Divine Instice and Goodness, in a fit Distribution of Rewards and Punishments. For in fuch manner do we see the nature of things order'd by the supreme Author of nature, that Virtue and Vice do generally, in good measure, carry their own Recompence along with them. That pleasure which men take in doing virtuous actions, and That fatisfaction in reflecting on them afterwards; That peace and quiet of Conscience, which from hence arises, are returns, by no means to be overlook'd; and fuch as, tho' founded in the nature of the thing, are yet too confiderable to be fo by Chance, without the wife Order and Appointment of the Lord of all things. So again on the other hand, That terror, shame, and remorse, with which bad actions are refolved on, executed, or remember'd, may justly be reckoned in the black detail of those Punishments, wherewith Providence is pleased to discourage and revenge Sin.

Befides these internal tokens of the Divine Favour or Displeasure; we daily see, that Health and Prosperity, and long Life, are annex'd, as well as promised, to the practice SERM. of Virtue; whilst Diseases, Poverty, and I. Death itself are the natural indeed, but ordain'd Consequence and Punishment of Sin.

These they bear likewise in their own persons. And then from other men, Benevolence, Reputation, and Esteem, are thought a just tribute to the Good; whilst cold Disdain, Contempt and Insamy, are made, in the reverse, the Recompence of Wickedness.

Nay, even natural causes are made to act in subserviency to Providence *: God guides, exerts, or suspends the influences of nature; He makes the Soil fruitful or barren at his pleasure; the Air wholsome or pestilential; and in ten thousand instances, the Works of his hands, when he would punish or reward men by them, are made to fulfill his commandment, and be obedient to the voice of his word. Nay sometimes even Prodigies are wrought, the Laws of nature set aside, or contradicted, and by the most surprizing, unexpected Events, the Mercy or Judgment of God is made conspicuous.

And now if they, who know some or more of these things to be matter of every day's Experience, shall yet persist in their Unbelies of the Government of Providence; and go on still to say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will be do evil; we must despair of ever convincing such men of any thing at all. For what argument is there

^{*} See Dr. Sherlock of Provid. Chap. 3.

to the truth of any Proposition; if their own I. observation and experience has not? However, that they may not complain of being censured without hearing; let us take a brief view of what they have to offer, either from the nature of God, or from the order of things.

What is objected from the nature of God, does indeed but betray the ignorance of the objectors, and will therefore ask but little

pains to filence and confute it.

Do they say, it is impossible for him to attend at once to such a multitude of actions and events, at such vast distances of place, as must be supposed, if the Care and Government of the Universe be attributed to him? But who is he shall dare set bounds to unlimited Omnipotence; or prescribe to God, as he does to the sea; Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be staid?

They who can conceive of God, that he is altogether such a one as themselves, may entertain such absurd thoughts of the confinement of his Power. But they, who have a juster sense of the infinite Persections of the Lord of all things, have only to enquire, whether such care as this, implies a contradiction in itself; and if it does not this, they count it no objection, that to a limited nature it appears difficult: because there can no ar-

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SERM. gument be drawn from the capacity of finite.

I. creatures, to that of an infinite Creator.

Or do they say again, that such care (if possible) would disturb, at least, that ease and quiet which makes the Happiness of God? This likewise (to omit their notion of Happiness consisting in supine indolence and inactivity; this likewise) is owing to the same fallacy. Difficult and easy are meer relative Terms, proper to be used, where the capacity and powers of the Agent are confined; but not where the Agent is himself the Fountain of all Power, and knows no bounds: So that he can with the same readiness perform every thing, that implies no contradiction, as he can do any one of them.

Or do they fay, laftly, that the care of fuch mean creatures, as inhabit this lower world, is beneath the Majesty of God; that he may govern with delight indeed, the beauteous orders of Angels and Archangels in the Choir of Heaven; but that it feems too great a piece of condescension, to concern himself about the things that are in earth? Nay, but O man, who art thou that replieft against God? Did God display his Majesty in the Creation of the world? And shall it be thought an abasement to preserve and govern it? Did he give his Son for the Redemption of Mankind, and will he think them below his notice and concern? Sure, He will not think those creatures beneath the care of his Pro-

vidence,

vidence, whom he at first disdain'd not to SERM. create; and much less those, whom he sent I. his Son into the world to redeem. And therefore they, who make this objection, would do well to consider, how impiously they restlect on the great Author of their Being and Salvation; whilst upon this wretched pretence they disbelieve his Providence. Indeed, all their vain reasonings will do little service to their cause, when they are thus every day consuted (as has been shewn already) by plain

Experience and Fact. For what they object, on the other hand, from the order of things, that there are many occurrences in this world, which they can no way account for, or reconcile with the notions they have of Justice and Goodness; and therefore cannot suppose, to be so order'd by a Being infinitely just and good: This objection, I say, will be of no weight, unless they could perfectly discern the dispositions of men, and the tendency of things; and foresee the final issue of the whole matter. For fo long as men that appear virtuous, may be vain and hypocritical; and they that are really virtuous, may be flander'd and traduced for vicious; So long again, as things to appearance good and beneficial, may by fome means or other become hurtful and a Curse; and evils on the other hand, thro' the favour of God, may be chang'd into a Bleffing: Laftly, so long as no man can properly C 2

distributions, or that his distributions are un-

I. but God has determin'd to adjust every thing exactly in a future state: for these Reasons, whatever difficulties there may seem to be, in the present distributions of Providence, they can be no just objections against it; nor argue, either, that God is not the Author of those

just.

The Rules of Providence are easy to be understood; as far as Justice and Goodness are concern'd in them, and they are agreeable to our common notions of those Attributes: But the application of those Rules to particular Events, is not always manifest to us. For the choice of proper methods of Government is an act of the Divine Wisdom; and fuch is the Wisdom of God, that he disposes particular Events to purposes we cannot apprehend. His Judgments therefore are unlearchable, and his ways past finding out. We cannot always account for the methods of his Government, but we ought always to believe them just and good; because he can do nothing inconfistent with those Perfections of his Nature. In this the friends of Providence will readily acquiesce: and even its enemies cannot but own it may be true; fince they must find themselves ignorant of many circumstances in every Event, which makes them unable to determine infallibly about it.

I cannot now stay, to instance in particular SERM. cases, but would conclude the whole Difcourse with this one Reflexion: that feeing these things are so; fince God governs the world, and we are therefore under the infpection of one, who is privy to our most fecret thoughts, and spieth out all our ways; to whom the darkness is as clear as the light, and from whom no fecret can be hid; who also is just to punish or reward us according to our deeds, and able likewife to proceed as Justice shall direct: feeing these things are so, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all boly conversation and godliness? How should we fludy to approve ourselves to him; upon whose final approbation, our Happiness or Mifery does so entirely depend? Alas! they must live without serious thought, or reflexion on these things, that can go on, in a course of Sin and Disobedience against him. Or else they must be men of the same character with those in the Text, who were fettled on their lees, and faid in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will be do evil.

May God Almighty, by his Grace, preferve us from such supine Negligence on one hand, and from such fatal Principles on the other; which are productive of such wicked Practices, and therefore attended with such woful Consequences, for Christ Jesus's sake, his only Son our Lord, to whom with the Father,

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SERMON II.

The Importance of St. Paul's Preaching before Felix.

A C T S xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answer'd, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Mas an Apostle, but a Prisoner; yet no way deterr'd (by the Sufferings he already had endured, or might farther expect, by the Grandeur or the Vices of his Auditory,) from discharging his Office with Sincerity; from preaching up the necessity of Temperance and Purity with regard to ourselves, of Justice and Equity to others; and the certainty of a future Day of Recompense, when our behaviour in these Matters shall be duly consider'd; and God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

His principal Auditor was Felix, a man notoriously guilty, both of Oppression and Incontinence; and therefore desective in both

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those Instances of Duty, which the Apostle SERM. had inculcated. Consequently the expectation II. of a future Judgment must be, to him, exthe mention of it had fuch effect upon him, that it made him tremble. But then, as his disposition was not changed, he chose to put off the confideration, that was fo unpleasant, and tather than part with his Sins, to think no more of the Punishment, that was due to them. This is the just state of the case, both as to the Apostles's preaching, and the Governor's behaviour. As he reasoned of righ-teousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answer'd, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. In the Text there are confiderable these Four Parts, into which it naturally divides itself, viz.

I. St. Paul's Method in this Sermon before

Felix: He reasoned, says the Text.

H. The subject Matter of his Discourse, and that was righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

III. The effect it had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, Felix

trembled. And,

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IV. The Manner of the Governors stifling his Conviction with these Words, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

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SERM. I. FIRST then, I begin with St. Paul's II. Method in this Sermon before Felix: He

reasoned, says the Text.

From the nature of Man, and from the ends of Society; he argued for the Duties of Righteousness and Temperance: and from the Nature of God, and the whole order of things, he collected the certainty of a future Judgment; when God shall try us by those Laws, he has prescribed, and give every man according as his work shall be. His Arguments were strong and cogent, his Deductions were clear and undeniable; infomuch that they startled and surprized the Roman Governor: who agreed with him in no Principles, but those of natural Reason; and would have been inflexible to all his Arguments, if they had not been rational. From hence then we may observe the use of Reason, in judging of the Doctrines of Religion; how when God vouchsafed a Revelation of his Will, and ordain'd a certain Order of men, to interpret and explain it; he meant not thereby to superfede the use of our Faculties, and command fuch a blind affent, as is not founded in Principles of Reason. Religion is a noble Improvement; of which the reafonable mind alone is capable. And furely then, it must be most absurd, and inconsistent, as well as much to the Dishonour of Religion, to confider them as opposite Principles; and suppose us under a necessity of ceasing

ing to be rational, when we commence reli-SERM. gious.

When St. Paul reasoned, or argued before Felix, he plainly referr'd the matter to the decision of his own Judgment; and 'twas only by the use of That, he could be supposed to attend to the Apostle's Persuasions. and determine in favour of his Doctrine. To the same purpose we are elsewhere exhorted, to walk by the same rule*, and to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh, a reason of the hope that is in us+. Nor is there any danger to Religion, from this method of proceeding; because Reason is always on the fide of Truth; and confequently those Doctrines, which are true, will ever be more confirm'd and certain to us, the more we use our Reason in considering and observing them. at bluo I abride multi-

So that when we see some men so extremely solicitous to decry the use of Reason, or private Judgment; one would be apt to suspect, 'tis because they are themselves jealous of the Cause they undertake; and being doubtful of the Truth of their Doctrines; or conscious of their Falshood, they are unwilling to submit them to an equal and impartial Scrutiny. And yet after all their clamours against private Judgment, 'tis impossible to exclude it; and whilst they inveigh against it with the greatest vehemence, they

^{*} Phil. iii. 16. + 1 Pet. iii. 15.

SERM. are forced to appeal to it, for the determina-II. tion of their cause.

For when they argue from the Weakness of human Reason, or the Authority of the Church, they do manifestly refer it to every man's Judgment, whether their Arguments be just or no, and sufficient to support their Conclusion. And in vain then, will they endeavour to destroy That, which at last must be the Judge and Umpire of the whole Controversy. For if by their Arguments, I should be induced to yield an implicit affent to all the Doctrines of their Church; it is not because my private fudgment is excluded; (no; that is absolutely impossible!) but because I am first persuaded, in my own Judgment, that I ought to be determined by fuch Authority. III availa 14

But methinks I could almost forgive those inconsistent Pleaders for Submission, when I consider the wild Extravagances, on the other hand, advanced by our modern affertors of Liberty; who are for raising human Reason as much too high, as the others would depress it too low. Because every thing, that is proposed to our Belief, must be determined by private Judgment; they think we have no more to do, but to consult our own sentiments, and that private Judgment has no need to be conducted by any assistances that are offer'd from without. But this alas! is not to use our Reason, but abuse it. For That, if

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consulted with a modest, impartial eye, and SERM. without an overweening opinion of our own Excellency, would quickly teach us, that we are not, of our selves, sufficient for these things; that 'tis indeed the business of Reason to judge of the Arguments, that are urged in proof of any Proposition; but that those Arguments may be of various kinds; fometimes arising from the Nature of the thing, at other times from the general Confent and Experience of mankind; from the Testimony of others, who have had better opportunities and means of Enquiry; or lastly, from the Testimony of God, who can neither err nor deceive. So then, if the Mysteries of Faith be unsearchable to human Reason, and such as we could never, by any powers of nature have discover'd; yet when they are reveal'd and confirmed to us, as the Oracles of God, human Reafon itself tells us, they ought to be believ'd and admitted as undoubtedly true. So that they, who pretend to rely fo wholly upon Reafon, as to reject all other Authority; do, in reality, but contradict themselves: since if they would hearken to the voice of Reason, that would instruct them to take in all the Arguments, that may be offer'd; and then determine, as the matter shall appear, upon a fair examination of the whole Evidence.

From St. Paul's Example we see, that it is no way absurd to reason in Divinity; and that however Reason be not alone sufficient,

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SERM. but the Grace of God is requisite, to enlighten our Understandings, and sanctify the use of Reason; yet a serious regard to it is always necessary; and we should never expect to find credit with our Auditors, when we preach to them only unintelligible jargon, and argue not from rational and confistent Principles. But then he only (it must be remember'd) reasons justly, who sets every Argument in a proper light, and gives it its due Weight; who, in the Wife man's expression, leans not too much to his own Understanding, but is willing to fubmit himself to any Attestation of a competent Authority. And thus far of the Apostle's Method, in his Sermon before Felix; He reason'd, says the Text. The next, or

II. SECOND Head proposed, was the subject Matter of his Discourse; and that was, righteoufnels, temperance, and judgment to come. And these Points may be consider'd, either absolutely in themselves; and so, St. Paul's Sermon, whereof the Text gives this account, is nothing elfe, but his proposing to an Heathen man's confideration, the necessity of holding a just and upright Conversation, in all -Sobriety and Chastity; because God will one day judge the world in righteoufness, and recompense to every man according to his works: or else relatively, as he took occasion to preach fome substantial parts of the Christian Religion to the Governor and his wife; that fo he

he might haply bring them over to the Faith SERM. of Christ. I would speak a little briefly to the II. Heads of the Apostle's Discourse under each of

these views severally. And

1. First then, let us consider them absolutely in themselves; and so, St. Paul's Sermon, whereof the Text gives this account, is nothing else, but his proposing to an Heathen man's confideration, the necessity of holding a just and upright conversation, in all Sobriety and Chastity: because God will one day judge the world in righteousness, and recompense to every man according to his works. To them, who confider the nature and uses of Society, even before they go on to confult the Laws of Revelation; it will be no hard matter, to evince the necessity of a fair and equitable Correspondence among men; that 'tis the Duty of the higher Powers, to use their Influence and Authority for the Protection of their Subjects, and not convert their Power into Tyranny and Oppression; that those Inferiors, in return, should pay a willing Obedience; and instead of weakning their Governors by Mutiny and Rebellion, they should exert the utmost of their strength and interest to support and maintain them; that lastly, among fellow Subjects, there should no arts be used of Fraud or Cozenage; nothing to over-reach or undermine each other; but all things managed in fuch manner, as may favour of nothing but Justice, Equity and Love. SERM. To them again, who confider the Nature H.

and Constitution of man; how by his rational Powers he is form'd for great and noble Defigns, and confequently floops below the end of his Being, when he gives himself up to sensual Satisfactions; how the indulgence of them will of course weaken his Body, and too much embarrass and oppress his Mind; how they at once take him off from his main business at present, and render him less fit to pursue it for the future: To such it will be easy to shew the obligation, that arises, from all these considerations, to observe a Temperance, or Moderation in our Pleafures, and not to run on, into Excess or Debauchery of any kind. The Convenience appears evidently from the nature of the thing; and that will lead us to the Will of the Creator, who has thus purposely ordained and constituted the nature of things; that they may, of themfelves, dispose and lead us to the practice of Virtue. In the mean time, if these Laws of the Creator are by fome men profanely difregarded and contemned, our natural notions of the Deity, that he is just, and wise, and powerful, may induce us to believe, that he will not pass by such insolence unpunished; but will one day inflict wrath upon his enemies, and heavily revenge their Disobedience.

From this view, we have taken of St. Paul's Doctrine, upon natural or rational Principles, it appears, that the beathen world,

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tho' destitute of Revelation, yet were not utterly SERM. deprived of Light; for tho' they had not the II. Law outwardly dispensed; tho' they had no external or immediate Revelation, they were yet a Law unto themselves; and had the matter or substance of it, as to moral practice, written in their hearts. The Book of Nature was their Rule; the Light of Reason was their Guide; the Precepts of Tradition were added to prevent their mistake. In the order of things, they could read their Duty described; from the nature of God, they might collect the Punishment of their Transgressions.

And if all this fell short of the Light, which we enjoy by Revelation; it was enough however to make them accountable for their Conduct, and punishable for their Defaults. But besides this consideration of the Heads of St. Paul's Sermon, absolutely and by themselves; I should remember, that they are

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d, o' 2 Second place, to be confidered relatively, and that in a twofold respect, viz.

1. In respect of that Faith, to which they appertain, viz. the Faith of Christ. And

2. In respect of the Auditors, before whom they were preached, namely, Felix and his wife Drufilla.

(1.) First then, we will consider them in respect of that Faith, or System of Religion, to which they appertain; and that is the Faith of Christ. The Accusation of St. Paul,

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SERM. and the Defence, which he made for himself, II. at his first Hearing before Felix, turning in great measure upon the Terms and Obligation of the Jewish Law, and the nature of that Sect of the Nazarenes, that was then newly sprung up; made it difficult for a Heathen, who was little acquainted with these matters, to determine between the Prisoner and his Accusers. And therefore the Governor found it necessary, to defer his Decision of the Cause, 'till he should have more perfect knowledge

of that way *.

This, as he might expect, from men learned in the Laws and Customs of the Yews; so it was but fair and equitable, he should take fome account of it, from the Prisoner himself. For which reason, after certain Days (as we have it in the verse before the Text) when bis Wife Drufilla was with him (whose Curiofity might make her defirous to enquire into the Cause, and whose Education in the Jewish Religion made her better capable of understanding it,) he then sent for St. Paul, on purpose to bear him concerning the Faith in Christ. And 'twas then, that the Apostle reasoned before him of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. So that from hence 'tis evident, that he infifted on them, not meerly as points of Morality, or Doctrines of natural Religion, but with a farther view to the Religion he profess'd, and about

^{*} See Hammond and Grotius.

which he was called in question; or as they SERM. are necessary branches of the Christian System.

There are two opposite mistakes relating to good Works; both alike inconfistent with the Doctrine of the Gospel, and destructive of the purposes of Christian Life. For whilst fome have disclaim'd and neglected them, as needless in the matter of Salvation; there have been others to extol and preach them up, as meritorious. These latter detract from the Merit of Christ, and the Efficacy of our Faith in him; whilft the former obstruct that Purity and Holiness of life which he requires. St. Paul, whatever account some have given of his notions, observ'd the middle between both extreams; fo far from decrying the Virtue of good Works, that he earnestly infisted on the necessity of righteousness and temperance; both of Justice to our Neighbour, and of Purity in ourselves: and yet, on the other hand, fo far from ascribing any Merit to them; that, as we may fairly gather from the whole tenor of his Writings, he reckon'd them vastly short of the measure of Perfection: and for that reason; to be no way acceptable in themselves; but only as they were done upon a Principle of Faith, and in Obedience to the Laws of God. 'Tis only when perform'd, out of fuch pious Dispositions, that our Works may be fairly deem'd the Works of Gospel Obedience: and then, VOL. II.

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SERM. for the fake of that perfect Obedience, which II. Christ has paid, our Obedience, tho' imper-

fect, shall be graciously accepted.

Such then were those good Works, such was that Righteousness and Temperance, which St. Paul preach'd before Felix, as enjoin'd by the Religion of Christ: not meerly the outward acts, or external appearance of those Virtues; but the inward habit and disposition of the Mind, influenced by his Laws, and govern'd by the hopes of his Salvation. knew there were Duties required, as well as Privileges granted in the Church: but then withal he knew, that those Duties are only made the Conditions of our Happiness; and not necessarily, or in themselves effective of it. Yet still, as they are Duties and Conditions, he had from hence occasion to collect, that they shall one day be enquired into by the supream Judge of all; in order to distribute Rewards or Punishments, in proportion as these Conditions have been neglected or And tho' this Doctrine, we have feen, might be proposed to the Governor, from Principles of Reason, or meer natural Light; yet farther, it was material to the Apostle's Design, to mention it, as one important Article of the Doctrine of Christ; that God has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man, whom he bath ordained—to be the judge of quick and dead. From the End and Purpose of this future

future Judgment it was easy to foresee, that SERM. a most glorious Reward should follow the diligent practice and observance of the Laws of Christ; and insupportable Misery revenge the violation of them. Or if the Governor were less apt to draw the consequence, the Apostle knew how to inform him farther; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; -that without boliness no man shall see the Lord; but every one, who would have hopes of such Felicity, must purifie himself, even as he is pure; -that at the last day, all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the refurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

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Let no one then pretend, that the prospect of Reward, and fear of Punishment, are improper to be urged as motives to Obedience; that our Practice ought to be influenced by nothing else but the love of God and Goodness; that our views should be perfectly difinterested, and free from all regard to ourselves; and that any motive of this kind will vitiate our Performances, and make them criminal inflead of virtuous. Our first tendency to good must naturally arise from a regard to ourfelves: and tho' other confiderations may afterwards come in; yet where men have fwerv'd from Duty, no doubt the Sanctions of the Divine Law, the Rewards and PunishII. motives to begin a Reformation. To this purpose our Apostle mentions the terrors of the Lord, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, as a proper inducement to persuade men; and for that reason, in his Sermon before the Roman Governor, he ensored the necessity of righteousness and temperance from the consideration of a judgment to come. And this leads me in order to the

(2.) Second Relation, in which his subject is considerable; and that is, in respect of the Auditors before whom he preached; namely,

Felix and his wife Drufilla.

It was an artful piece of Flattery in Tertullus, when he would gain the favour and good will of the Governor, to compliment him; that they enjoy'd great quietness, and that very worthy deeds were done unto their nation by his Providence *. But the Roman Historian, who had no Interest to ferve in drawing his Character, has quite otherwise described him; as a man of a mean and fervile disposition, and that exercifed his high Office in a most tyrannical and arbitrary manner. Per omnem fævitiam ac libidinem, jus regium servili ingenio exercuit, fays Tacitus +. And had there been no concurrent proof of this matter, in profane History; yet the very account given of St. Paul's

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^{*} Acts xxiv. 2. + Tacit. Histor. 1. 5. c. 9. vid. etiam Annal. 1. 12. c. 9.

Imprisonment in Scripture, would make it SERM. more than probable: for there we find him II. represented, as a person to be moved by Bribes; and as sending for Paul, the oftner for this very reason, because he hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him*. To these flagrant Crimes, in the administration of his Office; another Historian + adds an instance of his Incontinence, no less notorious. Drusilla, whom he call'd his Wife, had lawfully been married to a neighbouring Prince; but by the affistance of a Sorcerer had found means to desert his Bed, and fly to the adulterous Embraces of this profligate Roman.

Before this hopeful Couple, our Apostle was rather fummon'd, than invited, to preach, and give some account of that System of Religion, for which he was a Prisoner. duly confider'd the condition of his Auditors; and therefore infifted principally on fuch topicks, as were applicable to their case, and likely to strike them, with the quickest sense and Conviction of their Crimes; He reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment A righteous Governor would never take a Bribe to pervert Judgment, nor want one to make him execute it; nor would he wantonly abuse his Power to grieve and oppress the People that were under him. And therefore, when St. Paul reasoned of the ne-

^{*} Acts xxiv. 26. † Joseph. Ant. Jud. 1. 20. Cap. 6.

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SERM ceffity of Righteousness, he evidently reached II. the case of Felix; who was so notoriously guilty in these Particulars. Again, a man of Temperance and Continence, could not indulge himself in the adulterous invasion of another's Bed; or entertain the Wife of his Neighbour as his own. And therefore, when the Apostle went on, to reason of the necessity of this Virtue likewise; both Felix and Drussla must find themselves concern'd, who were so scandalously guilty of the opposite Vice.

But had he reason'd only from the Amiableness and Expediency of the Virtues themselves; such harden'd Sinners had remain'd perhaps inflexible to his Discourse, Their vitiated Appetites, fo long inur'd to Sin, were little qualified to tafte the Sweets of Virtue. And therefore the Apostle chose a fitter motive; he fet before them the terrors of the Lord, and put them in mind, -how the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men *: how he has - appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in rightcoufnefs +, -and render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, feek for glory, and bonour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth; but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath;

* Rom. i. 18. + Acts xvii. 31.

tribulation and anguish upon every soul of SERM. man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also II. of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew

first, and also to the Gentile *.

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In this Example of St. Paul, we have an illustrious Pattern set the Ministers of Christ, to fuit their Discourses to the Condition of their Audience; however rich or powerful, to deal their Reproofs with an impartial hand, to the most modish and fashionable Vices; and for that very reason, to inveigh more against them, because they are more common and familiar. Neither the numbers of the Sinners, their Wealth nor their Authority, should discourage or deter us from the execution of our Office, and giving them faithful warning of the pernicious Consequences of their Sin. It is the Duty of our station, to watch for their Souls, as they that must give account; and therefore we must be answerable for them, if we declare not the whole counsel of God; if we keep back any thing that may be profitable unto them, or necessary to their eternal Salvation. St. Paul, when he preached before a Heathen, was careful to apply himself to those Vices in particular, of which the Person he spake to was most eminently guil-And furely then, we ought not to be lefs folicitous, for the recovery of those, who have

* Rom ii. 6. &c.

SERM. been admitted into Christ's fold, but are II. again gone aftray from the Shepherd and Bi-

Shop of our souls.

It may not indeed be always proper, to make direct and personal Applications; as Nathan, by virtue of a special Commission, did to David, with a Thou art the man. It is not fit (as Elibu rightly observed) to say to a King thou art wicked, and to Princes, ye are ungodly *. Such conduct, instead of reforming, would often but exasperate, and provoke to Rage and Contradiction. It might fometimes perhaps be justified in private, where there is no Shame arifing from Spectators, no Eyes of the Populace to be drawn upon the Sinner, no publick Infamy to enfue upon it. But in publick and popular Difcourses, to point out particular Persons, and expose them as guilty of the Vices we arraign, would hardly be endured. It would be fo far from having any good effect upon them, that it would rather prejudice them against our future Labours; and make them more difficult to hear, and to receive Instruction. St. Paul, for this reason, took a different method; he infifted in general upon such topicks as were most suitable to the Condition of his Hearers; but he left the Application to those Hearers themselves, who, from his Description of their Duty, and the Motives to

it, could readily frame a Judgment of their SERM. own Defects, and what they might expect II. from them.

Mean while, if the Applications of the Clergy are less plain and particular; most highly it concerns the People, to be very ftrict and fevere in applying to themselves. When they hear any instance of their Duty described, or any Enormity pointed out and condemn'd; let them feriously lay their hand upon their Breast, and enquire (as they may quickly do,) Am I posses'd of this Virtue? or am I guilty of that Sin? Let them remember, that their eternal Interest depends upon it. Then let them go on to improve and brighten what they find to be well, to correct and alter what may be amiss; that so praying to God for the affiftance of his Grace, and receiving with meekness his engrafted word, it may indeed be able to fave their fouls. Even Felix himself was by this Method convinced of his Sin, and trembled at the Expectation of the horrible Vengeance which was due to it. And this Remark would lead me to the THIRD General Head proposed, namely, the Effect which the Apostle's Sermon had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, Felix trembled. But That I referve, for the Subject of another Discourse. Now to God, &c.

SERMON III.

Conviction the refult of St. PAUL's Preaching.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

SERM. — Go on now in order to the THIRD General Head proposed, namely, the Effect which St Paul's Discourse had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him; Felix trembled. And under this Head I shall have a fit occasion to observe,

1. The Connexion there was between the Apostle's Discourse, and the Governor's Conviction, or the Tendency which the one had

to produce the other.

2. The farther Tendency, which this Conviction had, to have produced in the Governor a true and real Reformation. And,

3. The Infignificance and Worthlessness of such Convictions, when they prove abortive

tive and unfruitful, and are not attended SERM. with any subsequent Amendment. III.

1. First then, we may observe the Connexion there was between the Apostle's Discourse, and the Governor's Conviction; or the Tendency which the one had to produce the other.

This now appears, in good measure, from what was faid before, of the Character of Felix, and the preaching of St. Paul. The one had been guilty of great Injustice and Oppression, in the Administration of his high Office; and likewise of great Lewdness and Incontinence, in his private and personal Capacity. The other, for that reason, chose to level his Discourse against the Practice of these Vices, by recommending the opposite Virtues, as most just and rational. And to make it fink the deeper into his guilty Hearer, he added the strongest Motive that can be urged, to influence our Practice; the Confideration of a future Judgment; when the strictest enquiry shall be made into our past Conduct; and the Wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

Felix, in all this, could not but make a secret Application, and find his own Interest to be nearly concern'd. He was conscious to himself, of his own Lewdness and Injustice; and how desective he had been in those Duties, of Righteousness and Temperance, which the Apostle had inculcated. This probably would make

him

SERM. him eager to attend to the Consequence of fuch Behaviour: and when he heard the terrible Vengeance that was due to his Tranfgreffions; 'tis no wonder, if fuch unexpected News should startle and surprise the Sinner. and strike him with a sudden Consternation. He trembled therefore, fays the Text, or was full of Dread and Terror; and whatever were his love of Wickedness, could no longer diffemble the inward Pangs and Anguish of his Mind, the fearful Forebodings of eternal Mifery. Our natural notions both of God and ourselves, do teach us to expect, he should bear a due regard to the Honour of his Laws, and feverely punish the Neglect or Violation of them. But these natural Principles, of themfelves, are apt to make but flight Impressions; we eafily pass by and overlook them, and the Heathen world, (however these Truths might be legible to upright Reason in the Book of Nature,) had at best but faint, imperfect notions of them; they rarely read or understood them; and wanted a farther Guide, a more explicit Revelation, to imprint anew, and

> Felix had before, the Light of natural Reafon for his Guide; But he had so given himfelf up to the government of his predominant Affections, that the voice of Reason was too low to divert or reclaim him from his Wickedness: and whilst the Impetus, which bore him down, was strong and violent, he rare-

more earnestly enforce them.

ly attended to the dictates of that gentle Mo-SERM. nitor, which utter'd itself with so weak an III. accent as scarce to be observ'd. The Mind must be sedate and calm, and the hurry of the Paffions must be laid, before the Principles of Reason can be well attended to, or its Commands can be obey'd. But when a fuperior Principle comes in, and the same things, which Reason faintly teaches, are anew explain'd and enforced, and deliver'd as the Oracles of God; this awakens the dull drowfy Sinner; this adds new force and energy to the Powers of Reason, and recommends the Principles of natural Light with an evidence difficult to be refisted. Felix, as much as he had neglected the Religion and Laws of Nature; yet, when he came to enquire into the Religion of Chrift, and found his natural Principles confirm'd by this new Revelation; this startled and surprized him with the fense of his Guilt, and expectation of severe Punishment. He might not be immediately convinced of the whole Truth of Christianity: But yet, when he heard such Doctrines deliver'd as these, which struck in with his own notions and fentiments of things; he wanted not much thought and recollection to approve their Truth, and give Testimony to them.

They were Doctrines, of which he could not pretend perfect Ignorance; they had only lain buried in filence and oblivion, and were SERM. now powerfully raised out of the Rubbish that III. had cover'd them, and brought to clearer Light. The word of God, (says the Apostle) is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edg'd sword; piercing even to the dividing assunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart *. So it was to Felix, who trembled at the preaching of this Word; and however he had sinn'd securely against the voice of Nature; yet now was alarm'd with the sight both of his Sin and Danger; and dreaded the scene, his Prisoner had open'd to him.

Nor is it strange, that the Persuasion of a future Judgment, should produce so great an Effect. For what can possibly affect us with a stronger influence than this Consideration, that the all-feeing Gon, and supreme Governor of all, will one day bring every work into judgment, with every fecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; that we must all appear before the Tribunal of that infinite Judge, who is not to be perplex'd with the nicety of Circumstances, nor confounded with the multitude of Caufes, nor kept ignorant for want of Evidence? Cited before this Tribunal, which way should the Sinner or Transgreffor of his Laws hope to escape his Vengeance? Can he bribe the Judge to pass a favourable Sentence, or to prevent

* Heb. iv. 12,

the Execution of a right one? Alas, but he SERM. has no Power, and his Judge has no Neces- III. fity: it is professedly the design of his Enquiry, to dispense Justice with an equal and impartial hand, and give to every man according as bis work shall be. This may be matter of great Joy and Comfort to them, who have been careful to approve their Consciences before him; who have given all diligence to make their calling and election sure; and with fear and trembling to work out their falvation. But to them, who have been negligent and disobedient, it must be matter of Confusion and Aftonishment; because it proposes certain and most direful Vengeance, as the Reward of their Impiety.

From hence then, it is observable, that the Joy of wicked Men, and the Pleasure which they take in Sin, (be it never so elevating for the time it lasts) does very often meet with interruption, with such Convictions and Despondencies, as make them melancholy and pensive; such as blast the seemingly pleasant fruit of their Transgressions, and make it even cumbersome and uneasy to them; 'till another (it may be, another sinful) object diverts the force of the Conviction. If they be less apt to reslect of themselves, there shall happen something from without to drive them to Reslection.

The hand-writing on the wall surprized Belshazzar in the midst of all his Grandeur and

SERM. and Jollity, and put him in fuch a fit of trembling, that his knees smote one against another. In like manner Felix fat in state with his Adulteress, when he sent for the Prisoner at his bar, to entertain them with fome account of his Religion. And then, which he little expected, this matter of Curiofity grew into Earnest, and the Truths deliver'd by the Prisoner so reach'd his case, and open'd to him fuch a scene of Woe; that he could not but tremble at the melancholy prospect, and frightful apprehension of it. And thus far of the Connexion there was between the Apoftle's Discourse, and the Governor's Conviction; or the tendency which the one had to produce the other: which was the first thing proposed to be consider'd under this Head: Proceed we hence in order, in the next place, or,

2. Secondly, to observe the farther tendency which this Conviction had, to have produced in the Governor a true and real Reformation. Now here, before all things, it is manifest, that there can be no grounds to expect the Reformation of a Sinner, 'till he is first made sensible of the nature of his Crime, and its inconsistency with that Law, which is given to direct his Practice. For what should induce him to alter that Behaviour, which is grateful to his Appetite; but the proposal of some superior Law, by which his Appetite should be restrain'd and govern'd? And there-

Apostle to lay down those rules of Righteousmess and Temperance, which the Governor
had violated; if he meant to shew him the
obliquity of his practice, and reclaim him
from the error of his way. But yet neither
was this sufficient: the most powerful incentives of human actions are Hopes and Fears;
and the Apostle, for that reason, mentioned
the consideration of a future Judgment, as
most proper to alarm the Governor with Fears
ofdreadful Vengeance; or, by degrees, perhaps,
to kindle up the Hopes of Immortality.

The Conceptions of habitual Sinners are usually so gross and sensual, that they are but little affected with the descriptions of spiritual Happiness, or the abstracted loveliness of Virtue: and therefore those considerations are rather useful, to encourage the virtuous, than to reclaim the vicious. But the thoughts of Pain and Misery do more sensibly affect them; and however they may oftentimes be deaf to the allurements of suture Glory; yet the denunciation of eternal Vengeance has a stronger Insluence; and even Felix trembled, when he heard the terrors of the Lord denounced, by the mouth of an Apostle.

This might naturally put him upon enquiring, how to escape the Terrors, which he sear'd so much. And That, upon enquiry, he would find to be no otherwise, than by forsaking those evil courses, against which they

Vol. II. E are

III.

SER M. are denounced. Was itthen, upon account of his Injustice and Intemperance, that he dreaded the consequence of that future Judgment, and the strict scrutiny which should be made into his Conduct: 'Twas best for him to reform, before that Judgment overtook him; and apply himself to the serious practice of these Rules of Righteousness and Temperance, which the Apostle preached; and which the Judge, in that day of Retribution, would be fure to applaud. If he trembled at the expectation of his direful Vengeance; it was his wifest course to betake him to those Methods of life which might recommend him to his Mercy: and however God might have winked at his former times of Ignorance; yet now, that his conscience was awakened by Conviction, and he saw both the Sinfulness and Danger of his ways, he had less to plead in his excuse; his motives to Amendment were more strong and powerful.

All this while, indeed, he proceeds only upon the flavish principle of Fear; He fears God only as a Judge, whom 'tis his interest to ferve, because he will severely punish and revenge his Disobedience; not as an indulgent Father, who is kind even to the wicked and unthankful; and whose righteous laws he cannot disobey without the highest Ingratitude. But where the former kind of Fear prevails for a compliance, tho' That, at first, may not be virtuous, as not being built upon

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generous and worthy Principles; yet in time SERM. it will easily improve into a habit of Virtue: III. and the whole frame and temper of the Mind would be fitted (as it were) to the practice of those Duties, to which it would be then inured. From beholding God therefore as our Judge, we should come to own him as our Father; and our distrusting, desponding, slavish Fear would be alter'd by degrees (with the temper of our Mind) into a confiding,

filial, reverential one.

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Some regards to our own Interest and Happiness will always be preserved: nor does our Religion at all aim to exclude them utterly; but rather binds them upon us with the strictest obligations, by representing the salvation of our Souls, as the End of our Faith, the object of our Hope, and the soundation of our Joy. But then our motives to good will not begin and terminate at home; our views will by degrees be more enlarged; and what we might do at first, only from selfish considerations; we shall be induced afterwards to do, in regard to the Glory of God, and in obedience to his Laws.

"Tis not to be expected, that a thorough change should be produced at once. A long habit of Sin is not so easily reformed. The first shock may prepare and dispose men for impressions of Religion; But they must have time to ripen into settled Picty, and grow into fixed Habits and a serious love of Virtue.

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SERM. And thus far, of the Tendency of the Gover-III. nor's Conviction, to have produced in him a true and real Reformation. It remains for me now only,

infignificance and worthlessness of such Convictions, when they prove abortive and unfruitful, and are not attended with any sub-

fequent Amendment.

It is the sport of none but cruel Tyrants, to be pleased with the groans and outcries of the miserable. And tho' it be necessary, to the Ends of Justice, to inslict Punishment upon the guilty; yet their barely shrinking at the prospect of that Punishment, can never wipe off the guilt, that has demanded it, without a thorough change and renovation of Mind, and dereliction of those former courses, by which That guilt has been contracted.

The man must be harden'd beyond all example, who can behold the Misery, to which his Sin exposes him, without any emotion or concern of Mind. But is it reasonable, that such emotion or concern, arising wholly from his love of Ease and Pleasure, and vanishing as soon as he could drive out the melancholy Reslection; is it reasonable, that this should excuse him before God, or avail for the Pardon of those Sins, which it cannot alienate him from?

INMITTANTO SAFARIO

Judas's Conviction was as sharp as possi- SERM. ble. He little thought his treachery should III. have had so dismal an effect; He was sensible of the Sin he had committed in betraying innocent blood; and he went so far towards making reparation, as to despise the wages of unrighteousness he had receiv'd, and carry back the thirty pieces of filver to the Chief But all this ferv'd only to torture and afflict him with the sense of his Guilt; it brought not his Mind in subjection to the Law of God; it produced not the fruits of Righteousness and Peace; but concluded in the utmost Horror and Despair, and an unnatural Violence offered to himself. It was not then the grief and anguish of his Mind, which could approve him innocent, or expiate his Guilt: he was so certainly reserved for farther Vengeance, that, (as our bleffed Saviour himself pronounced) it had been good for that man, if he had never been born.

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The Devils, again, are sensible of the nature of their Crime, as well as of the Miseries which they at present feel, or expect hereafter to endure. They know, that they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. This therefore they believe, and tremble, says St. James; they are struck with Dread and Horror, as Felix in the Text. But they are past the time of their Probation, and without all hopes of Amendment. Therefore their Grief

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SERM, and Terror may encrease their Misery; but cannot mitigate their Guilt. They can look back upon that Glory, which they once enjoyed, and know how to estimate a loss, which can never be retrieved. They can look forward likewise, to that future Judgment, which can no way be avoided; and know, that everlafting fire is from of old prepared for the Devil and his Angels. They can look up to the Divine Majesty they have offended and provoked: And they can look downwards too, and fee Mankind preferred before themselves. The whole Creation round them furnishes new matter of Torment and Vexation; and whilst they curse the Sin, which brought them to this mifery; they are so far from forsaking, that with the titmost Rage and Desperation they continue to increase it. Whilst thus, without hope of Mitigation or End, they reflect on their wretched and deplorable Estate, they must have all Hell and Confusion in themselves;

> From their Example we perceive, how little that Sorrow can avail us, which brings not forth fruits meet for repentance; which worketh not repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. The anguish of the Mind is no otherwise to be defired, than as it tends to the mortifying Sin in us; and to our Improvement and Growth in Virtue. Where

> and their Grief can have no other Effect, but

it fails of these Effects; it can never recom-Serm. mend us to the favour of God, or be of any III. real benefit and service to us. It is so far well, to be affected with the terrors of the Lord; and when a man is softened by the prospect of suture Judgment, there may be some hopes of reclaiming him from the error of his way. Whereas They are past all hope of recovery, who are deaf to the Threatnings of Vengeance, as well as Promises of Mercy; and even Felix himself shall rise up in Judgment to condemn such incorrigible Sinners.

The first step towards Amendment, is to be sensible and sorry for our Sin. But if we desire to receive any Advantage from that Sorrow; it should not only have respect to what is past: but we must let it have a farther Instuence upon our future Conduct; and shew, that our sears are not so purely mercenary, as to make us only shrink at the Miseries we are to suffer; without being active and vigorous enough, to bring forth fruit in the Obedience of our lives. The Fear of Punishment may be a Motive to Obedience, but will never be accepted in its stead.

'Twas here that the Governor's Conviction was defective; it was strong and vehement in itself; it affected him in such manner as he knew not how to disguise; it even made him tremble, and disorder'd his Spirits with a horrible Dread. But his long Continuance in Sin, had made it difficult for him to leave

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SERM. it; his habits of Vice now grown inveterate. and confirmed by custom, were not to be maken off at once; his Injustice and Extortion, his Lewdness and Incontinence had so engaged all the powers of his Body and Mind. that it was really a matter for much time and application, so to disengage and unhinge them all, as might give reasonable Hopes of reclaiming him from fuch foul Enormities, and persuading him to the opposite Practice of Righteousness and Temperance, from the Confideration of a Judgment to come. But the Governor was too violently led, or hurried by his Passions, to allow such time and application; and to engage in this matter with a fuitable Vigour and Resolution of Mind. Rather than forfake the Sins he had fo long indulged, he chose to divert the unwelcome Reflection on their pernicious Confequences, and dismiss the Apostle, who had led him to it.

And this would bring me, in order, to the FOURTH and last General Head proposed, viz. the Governor's manner of stifling his Conviction with these Words; Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee. But That I reserve, for the Subject of another Discourse.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

Chilemnois Formation

or a Mr. at a our highly to Office, as well as of Downings.

Delays of Reformation, foolist and dangerous.

A C T S xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answer'd, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

N these words we have a succinct ac-SERM. count of the rational Discourse made by IV. an innocent Prisoner before his guilty Judge. The clear and easy Method, which he used on this occasion, as fittest to convince and persuade; -the necessity of the Duties he inculcated, whether as founded upon natural or Christian Principles; —the Importance of the Motive, by which he would enforce them, taken from the certainty of a future state of Rewards and Punishments, and that impartial Judgment which shall be previous to it :- the fuitableness of all this to the condition of his Hearer, who being mightily defective in the Duties recommended, guilty of Corruption and Injustice in the administration

SERM. tion of his high Office, as well as of Lewdness and Incontinence in his private Conduct, had reason to apprehend the consequence of this future Judgment, and expect That Recompence of his Vices which was meet; - the Effect which the Apostle's Discourse had accordingly upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, by bringing him to a fense both of his Sin and Danger, and making him tremble at the frightful Profpect: -- All these Particulars, of great Use and Importance to direct us in the Conduct of our life, and imprint a just sense of Religion on our Minds, I have lately offer'd in this place as the subject of our Meditations. And from all this put together, one would be apt to conceive some hopes, that Felix might be afterwards a better man; and however he had formerly been stupished with the Lethargy of Sin; yet now that his Confcience was awaken'd by Conviction, and that Conviction strengthen'd by such solid Reasonings, his future Conduct fhould be fuitable to fuch Conviction; he should forsake the Sins, which put him in fuch fear, and embrace the Virtues, which might give him fatisfaction.

But alas, the Event was otherwise; he had not courage to resist the Passions he was wont to obey; he was not able to deny the Appetites, which he had used to gratify: He chose therefore to quiet his Conscience, by

pro-

prolonging the time; he put off his compli-SERM. ance with the Apostle's Counsel, till his IV. Conviction might grow cool upon his hands; and the Impressions, he had lately received, by degrees wear out. And This was what I mention'd as the

IV. FOURTH and last thing observable in the Text, namely, the Governor's manner of stifling his Conviction with these words, Go thy way for this time; when I have a con-

venient season, I will call for thee.

He did not pretend to except against his Doctrine, or be angry at the Freedoms he took; but only gave himself the air, as if he thought he had heard enough for once; and had better dismiss him for the present, till he should have more leifure, or be less fatigued, and so better capable of attending to his Preaching. From hence then we have a fit occasion to observe,

1. The usual Practice of habitual Sinners, under the power of Conviction; to neglect the present means of Grace, and defer their thoughts of Repentance and Reformation, to some future Opportunity.

2. The great Folly and Danger of fuch

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3. The great Wisdom and Necessity of a speedy Execution in matters, of so great Weight and Concern.

SERM. I. First then, from this Example of Felix, IV. I would observe to you the usual Practice of habitual Sinners, under the power of Conviction; to neglect the present means of Grace, and defer their thoughts of Repen-

tance and Reformation to some future op-

portunity.

Tho' the dictates of Reason are ever on the fide of Virtue and Religion, so that it might naturally be expected of reasonable Creatures, to conduct their behaviour by the maxims of Virtue; yet alas, the tendencies of Sense are opposite, and our Minds are so clogg'd and oppress'd with the incumbrance of these frail bodies, that they are forward in confenting to the motions of Concupifcence, and backward so much, as to consider any thing that contradicts them. We cannot but perceive in ourselves a strong and most prevailing tendency to ill, which requires not long thought and observation to discover itself to us; but has gotten such possession of our Wills and Affections, that whilft it is eafily perceiv'd, it will be hard to conquer and fubdue it. And here it is, that nature shrinks at the unpleasant undertaking. To resist natural Appetites, and deny ourselves those things, which are most grateful and agreeable to the motions and defires of our Mind, must have fomething in it uneafy and discouraging. The more fedately we think and confider of these things, the reason and the consequences

ces of them; the more rational, no doubt, SERM. it will appear to engage in so difficult an Enterprize. But even to confider of things contrary to Inclination, is unpleasant and uneasy. We often therefore suffer ourselves to be fway'd by the bias of Affection; and are too negligent to observe, or too slothful to obey the voice of Reason. The longer such Inclinations have posses'd and govern'd us, the more they will confirm themselves, and be twisted in such manner, and entangled (as it were) with our very composition, as will mightily increase the difficulty of discarding

and forfaking them.

Whilst thus by nature we incline to fin, and instead of being active to resist, do sluggishly give way to Inclination; it cannot fail being a great impediment to our correcting this misfortune of Nature, that the objects of religious Hope and Fear are absent and invisible, whereas those of sense are always present to our views, and the motives recommending them continually before us. The world with its vanities steals in upon the Soul, through all the avenues of Sense; and shews itself grateful to those Affections and Lusts, which our original Depravity has planted in us. The Splendor and Gaieties of life; the Riches or Honours of this world; the various Amusements to withdraw our Minds; and Entertainments suited to every Defire; the Example, Company, and Persuasions of ill men; the Wit, the Humour and the Air, by which they recommend their

SERM. Vices, and either kindle in spectators a new IV. stame of Imitation, or blow up the old one to a greater height: I need not say, how all This must obstruct the Reformation of evil Habits; and instead of mortifying Sin in us, will rather increase and strengthen and support its

Empire. Indicate a care

And yet, great as the difficulty may appear from the Lufts of the Flesh, and the vain Solicitations of the world; it is still made much greater, by the subtle suggestions of another Enemy, who studies to ruin by deceiving us. The Devil can eafily acquaint himself so far, with the Constitution of our Body, and the Temper of our Mind, as to perceive what Appetite or Passion is most imperious; and then fuit his Temptations to that Defire, which he fees to be predominant, and difficult to be refisted. In what manner, he communicates his Poison to us, whether by such fecret whispers as infect the Soul, without its knowledge; or by putting the Spirits in such motion, as may present the images which he defigns; or in some other manner, which we know not how to explain, we need not be folicitous to enquire; fince the Oracles of God affure us of the fact, that it is Satan, who fills our Hearts with evil Dispositions, to incline us to the practice of Sin. By the Sagacity of his nature, and his long Experience, he knows well how to attempt our Passions, and supply us with fit objects to exercise them on.

on. And he has Malice enough to use his SERM. utmost skill and power to seduce or betray IV. us to a Partnership in Guilt, that so we may be sharers likewise in his Punishment; in that everlasting fire, which is from of old prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Such reason is there from his Malice, his Cunning and his Strength, to esteem him a most dangerous and common Adversary; who as a rearing Lion, restless and outragious, walketh up and down continually, seeking whom he may devour.

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Now from all this put together, the united force of our three spiritual Enemies, who court and allure us under the name of Friends, and recommend Sin to us as most lovely and agreeable; the Infirmity of the Flesh, with its finful Appetites and Affections; the Gaieties of life, and vain folicitations of the world; the Policy of Satan, and his wicked Suggestions: from all these Allurements combined together, it is easy to account for the general Depravity of human kind; and affign an obvious reason, why men are so commonly addicted to the practice of Vice, and so little in love with that which is most truly amiable. For altho' if they would feriously reflect and treely use their Reason, the difficulties to be conquer'd, where the End is most desirable, should make them but the more earnest and diligent in their Endeavours; yet such is the Corruption of our Nature, so unhappily enflamed SERM. flamed by those Objects, with which the IV. world continually presents us, and blown up by the Craft and Subtilty of Satan; that they, who have any long time been engaged in the habitual practice of Sin, have their Minds so possess'd with the love and farther desire of it, that they are apt to despise the Precepts of Virtue and Religion, and will rarely take the trouble to reslect upon them with Coolness

and Sobriety.

Yet fometimes it so happens, whether from some present want of diversion and amusement; from weakness of body, or fome notable accident that has befallen them; from the Example or Discourse of others; or from the more immediate appointment of God, who condescends to make them this farther offer of his Grace: I say fometimes, (I believe oftentimes) it so happens, that the hardiest Sinners are tormented with an inward Uneafiness, terrified with the Guilt, and wrack'd with the Convictions of their own Minds. This was the case of Felix in the Text, who was brought to tremble on the Bench before the Prisoner at his Bar; and struck with a most fearful apprehension of the Vengeance which awaited him.

Here then, is a most violent struggle between Reason and Affection; this inclines to Vice for the sake of present Satisfaction, whilst that deters from it with the Menaces of suture Pain; and recommends the Practice

of

of Virtue, with unspeakable Advantages. SERM. Thus doubtfully divided, 'tis no wonder if IV. the Sinner tremble, and think on various Expedients to remove the galling Uneafiness of fuch Reflections. Sometimes, the Impossibility of Repentance shall be urged, or the Unpardonableness of Sin, to harden his Mind against the thoughts of that Misery, which cannot be avoided. At other times, the Mercy of God, and Satisfaction of Christ, shall be represented thro' fuch false mediums to his View, as to leave him full License and Scope to live at random; and take off all Neceffity of virtuous living, or repenting of the contrary. Thus shall Repentance be a needless Labour, as the Sinner is in mood: who either way is kept from returning to his Duty; either hoisted to Presumption, or sunk into Despair.

When these Delusions are successless, (as they cannot always succeed, the Conviction is too strong, the Truths of Religion are too clear and manifest) it remains then for the Sinner to flatter his Conscience, with fair Vows and Promises; and make it more quiet and easy for the present, by giving it assurance of better Satisfaction in the time to come. The present Heat of Passion, and Violence of Appetite, demand his present Attention; nor is he at leisure to obey the law of his mind, 'till this law in his members shall be less imperious. But when the Hur-Vol. II.

SERM ry he is now in shall abate; he may be better able to provide against future Assaults. It may be too, he is under fome Necessity of obliging his Friends; and if that does not draw him (as fometimes it may) to any criminal Compliances; it will however require fo much Time and Application, that he has not leifure to apply himself to serious Thoughts; to correct the ill Habits that have grown upon him, and humble himself duly before God. But fuch Necessity, he hopes, will not always last; the Hurry he is in will be shortly over; and then he shall have better Opportunity, and a more convenient Seafon, to do as Conscience shall persuade him, and act according to the force of his Conviction. Nay, the Station which he bears in Life, the Nature of his Employment, or the Duty of his Office, shall sometimes be urged, to represent it as incumbent on him, to forbear any immediate Application to other Business, and require his whole Thought and Study to be exercised in That. But when he is more at leifure, he will be as ready to attend to the other Precepts of Religion, as he is at present to the Business of his Station, which the Precepts of Religion have obliged him to.

'Twas upon these, or the like Grounds, that Felix dismissed his Prisoner, and deserred his Hearing to some future Opportunity. But how vain, alas! are such Excuses as these:

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like those of the Persons invited to the Mar-SERM. riage in the Gospel; whom the Lord thought IV. unworthy of any farther Favour or Tenders of his Grace. From whence it will be pro-

per to observe, in the

2. Second Place, the great Folly and Danger of such Delays, such trisling Procrastination and deferring of Repentance and Amendment of life. Now here, before all things, it is manifest, that that Business should be done instantly and out of hand, which is of greatest Consequence; and that we ought not to let any thing of less Moment justle out that, which is a matter of the last Importance; above all, that we should not admit of any thing in the mean time, which is any way inconsistent or opposite unto it; and will therefore increase the Labour and Difficulty of it afterwards.

By these Rules then, let us examine the Wisdom of his choice, who at present labours under the Guilt of Sin, and defers his Repentance to a future more convenient Season. Are the motions then of carnal Appetite of greater Moment or Concern to him, than the Laws of Reason and Revelation; that They must have the Preserence in his Esteem, and be regarded in the first place? Can his Gratitude to Friends extend so far, as that he should forget to be a Friend to himself; and for the sake of laying upon them some trisling Obligation, should increase the Burthen of his

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SERM own Guilt, and Obligation to severest PunishIV. ment? Or can any Employment or Business in Life, outweigh the Business of his eternal Salvation; that This should be postponed to the bare expedience or (what he calls) necessity of That? Alas! he cannot say it, he will not pretend it; his Conscience stings and makes him own the contrary! Only he would hush and quiet it, with vain Purposes of reconciling both together; of yielding to Sin under the present Necessity; and of attending to Virtue, when that Necessity is over; when his Passions shall be less impetuous,

and leifure will permit.

And here then certainly, is a most flagrant Proof of his egregious Folly; that he should own the Business of Religion to be of the greatest Importance, and yet make it give way to that which confessedly is of less! that he should see how his truest Interest and truest Pleasure are wound together with his Duty in the ways of Virtue; and yet wildly wander from them all, thro' distant paths, which carry him still farther off, and terminate in Death! Is he fure of extending his Life to any future Opportunity for rather, is not the Thread of Life fo very doubtful and uncertain, that 'tis every moment liable to be cut off, and no time, beyond the present, our own; which passes so swiftly by us, that 'tis gone ere we can speak; and no more in our power, than the Ages that past before we were

were born, or to come after our decease? SERM. Is he fure again, of the Use of his Reason to IV. the End of his Life? or may not the want of that disqualify him for the Work he purposes? Or suppose both his Life and his Faculties continued, yet what ground to expect, that his Dispositions should be better, and more pliable hereafter; that another Opportunity should serve him better than the present; that the Rules of Religion should appear more easy and practicable to him, when he has been longer habituated and inured to Vice? Will Gratification and Indulgence abate the Edge of his Defire? Will his Habits grow weaker by fubmitting to them, and lose their power by a long Continuance? Or will they not rather be confirmed and gather Strength, and with much more difficulty be rooted out?

Say then, (what may be greatly doubted) that he fincerely purposes the Repentance which he vows; yet is it any Argument of his Wisdom, (when 'tis the Labour and Difficulty of that Repentance, which frights him from it now,) that he chooses to increase that Difficulty by deferring it; and rather than indure a present Trouble, much easier surmounted, will rashly multiply his suture Cares; and swell the River that he sears, into a Sea of Gries? Does he really expect any State of Life hereafter; when he shall no way be exposed to Temptations from his F 3 Duty?

SERM. Duty? Alas! but every State of Life is furIV. rounded with Temptations; and he who cannot mind his Duty, till he meets with nothing to feduce him from it; must for ever
put it off with the same or like Excuses;
and wait for such an Opportunity as will never occur.

Besides, supposing such Exemption from Trial to be possible, in this State of Probation; yet, if he can never keep within the Rules of his Duty, but only when he perceives no Temptation to the contrary; This has not the Nature, nor can it intitle him to the Reward of Virtue. It is the Privilege of the Blessed above, to be freed from Temptations, because they have withstood them. But they who have always yielded and complied, have no reason to expect such Happiness. Their Minds are altogether vitiated and depraved; and 'tis but just with God, that what of choice they make their Crime, should of necessity become their Punishment.

But fay, whatever be the Difficulty, they resolve hereafter to encounter it. Alas! But they, who are unable to struggle with a less Difficulty, will be still less able to engage a greater! Their Purposes too will grow cool upon their hands; and Conscience, which now stings and spurs them on to Duty, may by long Dalliance be laid asseep, and forget the Dangers, with which it used to terrify them. And yet there is one thing worse than

than all the rest; their continued Provoca-SERM. tions under the Advantage of the clearest Light, against the frequent Warnings and Convictions of Conscience, may provoke God in the end, to withdraw the Influences of his good Spirit; and leave them to the Guidance of those Lusts, which they have chose to follow. So our bleffed Saviour threatened those Churches in the Revelation. that had departed from their first Love, and remitted of their Zeal in Religion; that unless they turned and repented, he would remove their Candlestick out of his place, and take from them, those Opportunities and Means of Grace, which they so ungratefully despised and abused.

In like manner to the Jews (who, besides the Writings of Moses and the following Prophets, and all those manifold advantages which attended them as the Church or chosen of God; were not to be reclaim'd by the stupendous Miracles and heavenly Doctrine of the Son of God; to Them) did he expressly declare, that the Kingdom of God, those means of Grace and offers of Salvation, which belong to his Church, should be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The same Measure, which is used with Societies and whole Kingdoms, is in its due proportion extended to particular persons; and they likewise may justly be deliver'd to a re-

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IV. Mercies could excite to the Practice of their Duty. The outward Means may be continued to them, whilft they are Members of a Community; where all have not so filled up the Measure of their Iniquity, as to be finally rejected. But those outward means of Salvation will want the inward workings of the Spirit to render them effectual; and these, tho' at first proposed indifferently to all, may yet be judicially withheld from such as do but turn the Grace of God into wantonness, and make those things, which were design'd for their Welfare, become an occasion of their greater Condemnation.

For a farther Illustration of what has been faid upon this Subject; let Felix's Example be once more fet before us. This Sermon of St. Paul was a new method of Instruction, which laid him under stricter obligations to Virtue, than he knew before; and the force of his Conviction sufficiently testified the Benefit of the Apostle's preaching. The Governor however was too strongly habituated and attach'd to Sin, to subscribe so easily to these new Rules of living; and therefore was for shuffling off the matter for the present, till fome fitter opportunity should occur, for his enquiring more particularly into the Doctrine of his Prisoner. Go thy way (says he) for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. But do we hear any more

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of that convenient Season? Alas, it is to be SERM. fear'd he thought but little farther of the matter; and rather than improve his Conviction to any good Purpose, he chose thus to let it

die, by stifling and deferring it.

It is true, he often fent for the Apostle afterwards. But was it with a purpose to improve by his Discourse? Was it, because that opportunity was come, when he could conveniently attend to him? No; but for a reafon widely different: it was, that he might give his Prisoner opportunity, to offer him fome Bribe or Ranfom for his Liberty. And when the Integrity of the Apostle disappointed the corrupt Expectation of the Judge; he was so far from acquitting the Prisoner, whom he found innocent, that he confined him two whole years in Prison: and at last, when he refign'd his Office, left him still in Bonds; for no better reason (the holy Text assures us) than to gratify the Jews, that had accused him.

And were these then, the Fruits and Signs of his Repentance? Was this, the Effect of that vehement Concern, that Trembling and Amazement, which the Apostle's Discourse of the necessity of Righteousness, and the certainty of suture Judgment had occasion'd in him? You see, he was still unrighteous as before; he abused his Power to oppress the innocent; he expected, he was ready to receive Bribes; and would not be otherwise induced

SERM. duced to pronounce a right and an impartial IV. Sentence. Such was the fatal Consequence of his Delay; and the same Consequence is greatly to be fear'd in others, from the same Behaviour. From whence I would hope it should

be no hard matter, in the

3. Third and last place, to deduce the great Wisdom and Necessity of a speedy Execution in matters of fo great weight and concern. It is usual for Things to illustrate and display their Contraries. From the Folly and Unreasonableness of all dilatory Excuses, it is natural to infer the Wisdom of a speedy Repentance. From the manifold Danger of delaying it, whether in respect of our Life, which is transient and uncertain; or in respect of our Dispositions, which may be less capable of Impression and more harden'd against the Methods of Conviction; or in refpect of our Creator, who may no longer continue to us the offers of his Grace: From all this, it is obvious to conclude, that there can be no fafety in purposing for the time to come; but only in the immediate execution of our purposes: that there can be no season more convenient than the present, and possibly there may be none befides.

Behold Now is the accepted time, behold Now is the day of salvation. And can they then have any due regard to that Salvation, who choose rather to hazard it at all these Adventures, than put forth their strength immedi-

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ately, and work it out? Can they justly prize SERM. or estimate the Blessing of eternal Happiness, IV. who place it behind temporary Good, and can suffer the Obligation of Friends, the Necessity of other Business, or the Gratification of their sensual Appetite, to hinder them from searching after it, and make them de-

fer it to a farther opportunity?

The Author of this Salvation has taught us otherwise, that unless we can forsake all our Friends, Relations and Possessions; that unless we can deny ourselves and all our Appetites; yea, and give up our very Lives for the fake of him and his Religion; i.e. unless we can forego them all when they stand in opposition to him, and tempt us to violate his Laws; we are not worthy to be his Disciples. He has taught us again, not to be over folicitous in providing for the things of this Life. what we shall eat or drink, or how we shall be chathed; not to let these things withdraw us from our Duty towards him; but to feek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and then, with a modest Use of the Opportunities he puts into our hands, to rely upon his Providence, with full affurance, that all these things shall be added unto us, in such measure as is most proper and convenient for us.

Let the time past therefore of our lives suffice us, to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. Henceforth let us walk more circumspectly. SERM. Spectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, which flies to swiftly by us, and working while it is called to day, as confidering, that the night cometh, when no man can work. Let us feriously bewail the Errors of our past Lives. and no longer defer that most important Bufiness, which has been then too long, when it has been at all defer'd. Let us provide more especially against those Temptations, which we have found most potent heretofore; and not imprudently engage in War, without confidering our Strength, and providing against those Assaults, which our Enemies may make. Above all, let us look unto the hills, from whence cometh our help; and remember that our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who bath made heaven and earth. Let us be earnest in our Supplications at the Throne of Grace, that, however weak in ourfelves, we may yet be mightily strengthen'd from above, and excited to work out our falvation with fear and trembling; from this Confideration, because it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do. To him be all honour and glory, now, and benceforth for evermore. Amen.

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SERMON V.

The Character of the Son of Man explained.

JOHN v. 27.

And bath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

UR bleffed Saviour, who always went SERM. about doing good, having taken occafion, on the Sabbath day, to restore to the free use of his Limbs, a certain poor impotent man, who had for many years laboured under his Infirmity; instead of convincing the Yews by this furprizing Miracle, that he was fent from God, was maliciously traduced by them as a Sabbath breaker, and worthy therefore to be punished with death. To this our Saviour replied, that his heavenly Father himself, whose resting from the Works of the Creation was the great Example of the Fewish Sabbath, did not however rest from all his Operations; but has ever fince continued his Works of Preservation and Providence, and dispensed his Favours throughout all times without distinction: So that in recovering this poor Cripple, our Lord did but concur

SERM. with God's gracious Design of doing good V. to men. My Father, says he, worketh bi-

therto, and I work.

This Answer, it seems, instead of satisfying their Objection, did but furnish them a By his breaking of the Sabbath, new one. they thought he had incurred Death; but now much more when he had added Blafphemy. For fuch, they imagined, was that Equality with God, which he affumed to himself in calling God bis Father, idou maleea (as it is in the Original,) his own Father; bis Father, in a fense proper and peculiar to himself, so as he was Father of no one else: -not by Creation or Preservation; as he is the Father, not of Mankind only, but of all his Creatures: -not by Adoption, as he is the God and Father of his Elect:—but by an eternal and unconceivable Communication of the Divine Nature, whereby Christ is, (as one of our Creeds fignificantly calls him) "very God of very God."

As a Reply to this Exception, our Saviour took occasion, first to justify his Works, as perfectly consistent with the Will and Pleasure of the Father; and from thence proceeds to argue his Divine Power and Equality by Nature with him. He afferts, that all men ought to bonour the Son, even as they bonour the Father; and urges it, as the necessary Consequence of that Power he had, of raising and quickening the Dead. He not only affirms that the

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ment, execut Father gave bim Life, but that he had given SERM. him to have Life in himself: which could not be without partaking of the Divine Nature; fince no other Principle, but the Divinity, can be the Fountain or Origin of Life. To this he adds, in the Text, the Prerogative of Judgment, which (together with the Power of raising the Dead) implies Omninotence and Omniscience, the incommunicable Attributes of the supreme Being, and by Consequence proves him to be God, Power of Judgment he had before mentioned at the twenty fecond verse. The Father, lays he, judgeth no man, but bath committed all judgment unto the Son. And this he repeats again in the Text; He bath given him authority to execute judgment also, because be is the Son of man.

In discoursing upon which Words, these three things will be proper to be explained, (all well worthy of your serious Meditations, at this Season of Advent more especially) to

wit,

I. The true Import and Meaning of That Character, by which ourbleffed Saviour is fo often distinguished in the Gospel; THE SON OF MAN.

II. The Nature and Design of That Judgment, he is here said to have Authority to execute. And, SERM. III. The Dependance which these two have on one another; or how That Autho. rity is here faid to have been given him for this reason, because he is the Son of man,

In his younger Day . These Points are more copious, than that he differd on thing one Discourse should suffice to illustrate and from a Servent General explain them. And therefore I shall confine myfelf at prefent to the Parents Gal 401

I. FIRST of them, where I am to inquire He calls him, If by into the true Import and Meaning of That 1. draw mort him & Character, whereby our bleffed Lord is fo toften diftinguished in the Gospel; THE SON

His Difeifles did not Now hereby it has been generally thought,

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mortal Man

that our Saviour's Humanity is intimated to After his Referrit that our Saviour's Humanity is intimated to him the same that he was verily and by it because them truly Man *. And there can be no doubt, delan lo be the Som but that in the Scriptures of the old Testament 19 will Comes the Names of Man, and the Son of man, are well-new fynonymous, Thus when God is faid not to be a man, that no more to condern es be should lie; neither the son of man, that he Ichnoton 4 on Mall should repent; Interpreters have usually understood the Importance of those Phrases to be one and the fame: and if there be any Difference between them, it is not to be fought for in this Translation; but in some other Variation of the Phrase in the Original +. And in the Syriack Language, which

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was the very Dialect our Saviour used; this SERM. Use of the Phrase prevailed so much, that V. even Adam himself, tho' he were created immediately by God, and not sprung from any earthly Parent, is yet called expressy in the Syriack Version of the new Testament

first fon of man*. He was the Father of all men,

but the Son of none. And therefore when he is called the Son of man, this must not be strictly and grammatically taken, but ought to admit of an equitable Construction from the Idiom of that People, who used to design all men indifferently by the same Character.

But however from hence it may appear, that such was the just Import of the Phrase; and that therefore, when 'tis used of our bleffed Saviour, it must of course imply his being Man; yet I conceive it will be necessary to suppose it had some farther Meaning, as applied to him; when we observe with what peculiar Emphasis 'tis used, and how plainly 'tis defigned to distinguish him from all other Men besides. For whereas the Prophets Ezekiel and Daniel are each of them, only in a familiar way, called Son of Man; our bleffed Lord is called, in a more eminent and peculiar Manner, ο υίος τε ανθρώπε, the Son of Man; or the Son of the Man, as it might be pertinently rendered. Which way of speak-

* I Cor. xv. 45, 47.

Vol. II.

SERM. ing being never used of any one besides himfelf, may incline us to suppose some farther Meaning than this, which would equally

extend to all the Sons of Adam.

To account now for that farther Meaning, which peculiarly belongs to Christ; Interpreters are divided into two very different and indeed opposite Opinions: and whilst some have taken this Appellation to fet forth his Grandeur and Authority, and express the glorious Majesty and Dignity of his Person; as he is far superior to all other men, and invested with the high Office of Mediator between God and man: (I fay, whilft this Interpretation is given us on one hand:) others, on the contrary, have chosen rather to refer it to Christ's State of Humiliation and Abasement; when he took on him the form of a servant, was despised and rejected of men, a man of forrows, and acquainted with griefs.

It may be faid, in favour of the first of these Opinions, that the Prophet Daniel, in his Vision, describes the Messiab under this Character, and calls him one like the Son of Man; or (as some would have it rendered) the very Son of Man; at the same time that there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve bim: bis dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*. And it may be

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

urged likewise in favour of the latter, that SERM. this Appellation of the Son of Man, is by the V. Pfalmist used as a Term of Contempt or Diminution. Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou wisitest him? Which Passage, from the Application of it in the new Testament, appears to have been spoken of our Saviour Christ.

Add to this, that the Hebrew Word there used, and by which therefore it may seem reasonable we should explain the Phrase in the new Testament, is not with, but in, but in, i. e. (according to the known Distinction of those Words in the sacred Language) the Son not of a great or illustrious, but a mean Man. From whence both Daniel and Ezekiel were so called, by the Angels that talked with them, to put them in mind of their own Base-

ness and Infirmity.

But the truth is, neither the one nor the other of these Opinions can bear a strict Examination. For in both these Views, in his State both of Sufferings and Glory, we may observe, he is alike represented under this very Character of the Son of Man. Was it the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his bead, who was by Judas betrayed into the bands of sinners, and after That, was lifted up upon the Cross? (All which Instances refer to his State of Humiliation and Disgrace!) It was the same Son of Man, who was Lord also of the Sabbath, who afferted his own

V. who is described as sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven; nay, and who declared yet more expresly in the Text, that he had authority given him to execute judgment, also, for this very reason, BECAUSE he is the Son of Man. So that fince he is mentioned under this Character; both in his State of Humiliation, and that of Exaltation; we ought not to confine it to either of them exclusivly of the other: but to give such an Account of the Import and Design of it, as

may serve to comprehend them both.

Now in both those States, 'tis evident, he was the same Messiah, the same Jesus and Saviour of mankind, that had been promised to our first Parents in Paradise; and after That, determined to the Seed of Abraham, and then of David. And indeed, did we but duly attend to those Passages, in which he stands distinguished by this Character, and calls himself the Son of Man; they might then naturally feem to fuggest, that he was indeed that promised Messiah. For 'tis in the first place undeniably evident, from the Style of the new Testament, that the Names of Christ, or Messiah, and the Son of Man, are Terms equivalent. From whence our Lord uses to speak of himself under this latter Title, in fuch Places, where the Occasion of his using it, must put the Meaning out of question. Did the High Priest demand of him, whether

ther he were Christ the Son of God? He Serm. readily made answer, Hereaster ye shall see the V. Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Did Andrew again tell his brother, We have found the Messiah which is called Christ? Did Philip tell Nathanael, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write? Lastly, did Nathanael confess him to be the Son of God, and King of Israel; the known Titles and Characters of the Messiah? We find Jesus declaring thereupon, in confirmation of all, Hereaster ye shall see heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Again, if we compare the Types and Predictions of the Messiah in the Old Testament, with those accounts we have of their completion in the New; we shall easily observe, that our blessed Saviour, when he makes application of such Passages to himself, chooses to term himself the Son of Man; and thereby clearly intimates, that this appellation did properly belong to him, as he was the promised

Meffiah, or Christ of God.

Once more, lastly, the same meaning of the Phrase sufficiently appears from the Confession of the Jews themselves, who startled at Christ's Prediction of his Death upon the Cross, immediately replied, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou the Son of man must be lift

V. seems, rightly apprized, that the Son of Man was properly the Character of Christ. But they were preposses d likewise, with that prevailing prejudice of their Nation, that he should never dye. And from hence arose the difficulty they objected to our Saviour's Discourse; How say'st thou, the Son of man must be list up? Nor do even the modern Yews disclaim the Exposition of their Ancestors; but by the Son of Man, described in that passage of Daniel abovementioned, teach us to un-

derstand their King Messiah +.

From all this it feems to follow, that the Messiah, and the Son of Man are terms equivalent: and not without good reason; since the latter of these does very plainly extend to both the parts of the Messiah's Character; and includes at once his state of Humiliation, and his state of Exaltation, or Triumph consequent upon it. For when we find him, by way of eminence, thus called The Son of Man; this Character naturally leads us back to that first Promise made of the Messiah, in which he is called the Seed of the Woman; and is foretold at once, as having his own beel bruifed by the Serpent, and then in return bruifing his bead for it. Here now, we have the Messiah predicted in his twofold State; both as a man of forrows, and acquainted with griefs, and exposed to all that pain and agony whereby the

^{*} John xii. 34. † Vid. Jachiad in Daniel.

Serpent

Serpent was to bruife his beel; and likewife SERM. as a glorious and mighty Conqueror, and obtaining that Victory over Sin, and Death, and Hell, whereby it is here promised he should bruise the serpent's head. Both these, you may observe, are predicted of the Seed of the Woman, between whom and the Serpent, and his Seed, there commenc'd a wide and mortal Enmity. And who then is this Seed of the Woman, but the most illustrious Offspring of our first Parents, and so, in a most eminent and peculiar sense, THE SON OF MAN? Which is the Character our Saviour chooses to describe himself by, in those very passages, where he speaks of the enmity there is between him, and the Devil and his Children; the Sufferings he should endure from the Devil, and his Agents instigated by him; and the Victory he should at last gain over them all, by his Death and Refurrection.

The Son of Man then, was That Seed of the Woman, which had so graciously been promised our first Parents in Paradise. And it is beyond all doubt, with regard to this Prediction, that as Adam was confessedly the first of men; so our blessed Saviour is term'd the second and the last Adam. He is called after the name of Adam; because the first Adam was but the Type or Figure of him that was to come; inasmuch as Christ is no less the Source and Fountain of our spiritual Life, than the other of our natural; and we

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SERM. do not more certainly derive our Sin and Mifery from Adam, than they who are renew'd and fanctified receive their Remedy from Christ. And he is called the second or the last Adam; because there can be but these two Principles: and all mankind being of one fort or other, either Aliens or Regenerate, are reckon'd to be contain'd under these Two. as their proper Representatives. He is called, by way of eminence, The Seed of the Woman in the fingular; because he only, of all the fons of Adam, was able to restore what he had forfeited; and by engaging in a fevere conflict with the Serpent, to disarm him of his Force, and lay him at his Feet. From whence it comes to pass, that all the rest of mankind being neglected, we there find mention of Two Men only, the first Adam and the last. And I conceive it must be with regard to this Distinction, that we are to understand those phrases in Scripture of the old Man and the new: the former denoting those corrupt Dispositions and Affections, which arise from the original Depravity inherent in our Nature, and derived to us from the Sin of Adam; the latter denoting that state of Grace and Renovation, which is the privilege proposed to us in the Christian Church.

All these are but so many corroborating Proofs, that when our blessed Lord is called the Son of Man, he is thereby intimated to have been That Seed of the Woman, which

was promifed to repair the Damage of our SERM. first Parents; and by suffering a little from the W. Malice of the Serpent, to gain the surer Victory and Conquest over him. And it was not without the highest Wisdom, that he so often chose to distinguish himself by This, before any other Character of the Messiah; as being more particularly adapted, than the rest, to obviate and confute those errors and inveterate Prejudices, with which the Jews were possess'd; and to instruct them with juster notions, both of his Person, and the Nature of his Office.

For did they, in the first place, doubt and hefitate about his Original, and the manner of his coming? Did they imagine he might drop to them from the Clouds, or spring out of the Earth? Did they make it an objection against our Saviour's being He, that they knew his Parentage and his Relations; whereas when Christ came no man should know whence he was? When they heard him called the Son of Man, this should carry back their thoughts to the first notice that was given of him; how he was there promifed as the Seed of the Woman, partaker of flesh and blood like other men, and like them too descended from the same common Mother of all living.

Did they again imagine, from the different Descriptions of the Messiah, in the Old Testament; sometimes as a despicable and afflicted

Man,

V. rious Prince: Did they, I say, from hence conclude, there should be two distinct Messes the son of Joseph, and the Son of David? Behold, this Title of the Son of Man might lead them back to that original Prediction; where they would perceive both Characters to center in the same Person; who having his own beel first bruised by the Serpent, in his lowly and afflicted State; after that, in return, should bruise the Serpent's bead, and come off more than Conqueror.

Did they again expect a temporal Deliverer, flourishing with outward Force and fecular Authority? Did they look for a Melliah, who should break the Roman Yoak, and make them superiour to all Nations of the Earth? Behold the fame Prediction refer'd to by this Title of the Son of Man, might better instruct them in the nature of his Office. He was to be a King and a Conqueror, it is true. But then his Kingdom was not to be of this world The enemies he had to vanquish were the Serpent and his Seed; that old Serpent the Devil together with the other Powers of Darkness and those wicked men, who in a Spiritual Sense are Children of the Devil, and do the works of their Father. From this condition of his Enemies, they might justly argue for the nature of his Government; that spiritual Enemies must be conquer'd by a spiritual apply the

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ritual Force; and that the Kingdom to be e- SERM. stablish'd in the room of their usurp'd Empire, must be spiritual too. This might correct their expectations of earthly Grandeur and external Pomp, and prepare them to receive their Saviour, however he appeared; even tho' he had not where to lay his head.

Once more, laftly, did the Jews fondly imagine, that they should always continue the only Favourites of Heaven? Did they expect to see all other Nations excluded the Mesfiah's Kingdom, whilft they alone should be admitted to the enjoyment of his Bounty and Protection? It was because they had forgot, or did not duly reflect, that he who was the Son of Abraham and David, was likewise the Son of Man, the promised Seed of that Woman, who was the Mother of all living; and promised for this very purpose, that he might bruife the Serpent's head, and repair that harm and injury, which through the Serpent's fubtilty was done to Man. From whence it was easy and obvious to conclude, there should be no difference between the Few and the Greek; but all Nations should be welcome to partake of that Benefit, which was promifed to our first Parents, as the Representatives of All. Accordingly, when the Meffiah is mention'd, by the Prophet Daniel, under this Character of the Son of Man, we find his Kingdom is described as extending universally; and we are taught, that all people, nations and languages

V. ing Argument, that his Name should not be great in Israel alone, nor his Church shut up

within the bounds of Palestine.

And now let me have leave to pause a little, to contemplate and admire the Excellency of this glorious Name, which we have too often, all of us, I fear, read or heard mention'd in the Scripture, without any great concern or impression on our Minds. But blessed God! With what immense Wisdom was this Name chosen, before all the other Characters of the Messach, as best fitted to obviate and destroy all Prejudice and Error, and silence the Cavils of unreasonable and

gainfaying Men?

The Son of Abraham or David, had he been called, nay, or the Son of God; neither of these had tended so directly, to remove those Prejudices of the Jews: perhaps they had served rather to strengthen them in some; considering how perverfely those Characters of the Messiab had been commonly explain'd. For they took them to denote the Dignity and Grandeur of his Person; and in some sort to restrain the Dispensation of his Favours to themselves. Abraham was the great Patriarch of their Nation, and it was upon account of their descent from him, that they flatter'd themselves with outward Privileges and Distinctions; to be one Day not only restored to them, but enlarg'd by his promised Seed, the victorious

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victorious Messiah. David, in like manner, SERM. was their most pious King and Governour, whose Seed, it had been promised, should fit upon his throne for ever; from whence they, through their spiritual blindness, vainly expected, in a carnal Sense, that there should ere long grow up a stem out of the root of Jesse; which should reign and prosper upon Earth; which should affert the privileges of his own people, and extend his Empire over all his Enemies. So that had our Saviour used to call himself the Son of Abraham, or David, he had but struck in with the prevaling prejudices of the times; and flatter'd the groundless hopes the people entertain'd of a temporal Deliverance. Nor had they been less encouraged by that other Title of the Son of God. For That likewise was abused by their fond Expectations, to denote him a Prince of fecular Authority and outward Force, for the special Advantage of that Nation, which God had owned for his peculiar People: As may appear from Nathanael's Confession of our Saviour; Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Ifrael.

But when in this humble Style he only called himself the Son of Man, and thereby refer'd them to the original Prediction of his Person and Character; he then furnish'd out a sovereign Remedy against those satal and pernicious Errors, which had so deeply taken root; and taught them at once the necessity

V. and likewife the extent of those Benefits,
which he was ready to bestow indifferently
and promiscuously to all the Nations of the

I will conclude this Discourse, when I have confider'd one Objection against this Exposition of the Title or Character of the Son of Man; and That is, how it came to pass, that he so strictly forbad his Disciples to preach or declare him to be the Christ; if he had himself so often, by his frequent use of this Character, testified the same thing? But however at first fight this may appear an Inconfiftency, and be charged with a defign to publish and conceal the felf same Doctrine; yet upon a nearer enquiry it will not be difficult, to find out a way to reconcile the difference, without giving up that Exposition of the Phrase, which has been so abundantly confirm'd. For his Defign in forbidding his Disciples to preach this Doctrine, manifestly was not to keep the serious Jews in a profound Ignorance: (the whole course of his Doctrine and Miracles tended naturally to inform them; and they are therefore upbraided with Infidelity, for standing out against such convincing Evidence:) but to comply with some exigence or concurrence of affairs, which might make it, at that time, improper for his Disciples to be the Publishers and Preachers of it.

Nor are we at a loss to account for the Im- SERM. pediment. For besides that, it became out Lord to be the first Preacher of the Gospel. and publish the first notices of that Salvations. which he came to work; it is certain, that the Disciples being not as yet endued with that power from on high, (which after our Lord's Ascension was so plentifully shed forth upon them,) labour'd themselves under the fame Prejudices with the other Jews, with regard to the nature and defign of the Mefhab's Kingdom. Even the Divine Converfation of their Master, was not, it seems, fufficient to root them out: but whatever he might fay of the Difficulties and Hardships they must expect to suffer, they were all so charm'd with golden Dreams of Crowns and Scepters, that when two of them had plotted for the principal Preferments in his Kingdom: they presently provoked the Jealousy and Envy of the reft.

From hence were they so backward to believe our Saviour's Predictions of his Death and Sufferings, as tending to frustrate their Hopes and Expectations, and inconsistent with the notions they had always entertain'd of the Messiah: infomuch, that when the Truth of those Predictions was confirm'd by the Event; they were immediately dejected and cast down, they began to despond and suspect they had been mistaken, whilst they trusted it had been be which should have redeemed Is-

rael.

SERM. rael. When after this again, they were flush'd with new Hopes upon his Refurrection; they presently return'd to their old notions of an earthly Government, and flatly put the queftion to him; Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? It was some time after this, before they fully understood the true extent of Gospel Privileges; or knew how to look upon the Gentile world, as other than common or unclean. So that it was neceffary, they should be first themselves instructed, in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; before they took upon them, to teach and to instruct others. Otherwise instead of propagating Truth, they had promoted Error; they had but confirm'd the common prejudices for the present; they had at once convinced themselves of Falshood, and hinder'd the Efficacy of our Saviour's Doctrine: when what they had thus preached, should come at last to be contradicted in the Event.

These were sufficient Reasons, why they should be forbid, at the present, to declare their Master's Character; and tho' they were sent, on some occasions, to preach the Gospel; yet they were reasonably put under some Restrictions; and required to wait for farther Knowledge and Illumination, by the plentiful Effusion, of the Holy Ghost. But they were no just Objections against our Saviour's bearing witness of himself, who was free from all Prejudice and Error or; to his laying a Foundation

dation for the future establishment of his true SERM. Character, by appealing to the most ancient Prophecy concerning him, and ftiling him-

self the Son of Man.

I should next proceed to the SECOND Head proposed, viz. the nature and defign of That Judgment, he is here said to have Authority to execute. But this must be referv'd to another Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.

will be proper to comment.

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SERMON VI.

CHRIST the appointed JUDGE, because be is THE SON OF MAN.

10 HN v. 27.

And hath given bim authority to execute judgment alfo, because he is the Son of man.

Proceed next in order, to the SE-SERM. cond Head proposed, namely, to VΙ. confider the Nature and Defign of That Judgment, he is here said to have Authority to exe-

ecute, But this mult be re-

cute. And for the better illustration of this

matter, it will be proper to enquire,

1. Into the Certainty of the Fact, that Christ is actually invested with this Power of Judgment.

2. In what Respects, more particularly, it does confift, or is executed by him. And

then,

3. In what Sense he is here said, to have Authority to that Purpose, given or derived

to him from the Father.

1: First then, I would enquire into the Certainty of the Fact, and shew, that Christ is actually invested with this Power of Judgment. And now the common Distinction of our

our Saviour's Offices into Regal, Prophetical, SERM. and Sacerdotal, (the first to govern, the second to instruct, and the last to expiate the Offences of his Church,) may fave us, in this Place, the Pains of fearthing thro' the whole Oeconomy of our Redemption, to find out this Authority, of executing Judgment. For That, there can be no doubt, is one Branch of the Regal Authority, of Power, it being the Sovereign's undoubted Right, to put the Laws in Execution. This is what, I think, all Schemes of Government agree in; nor is it possible, indeed, for any Government to subfift without it. So that, if we can but make out Christ's Title to the Regal Authority, we shall, by the same Labour, make good his Title to this Power of Judgment.

And this the Scripture afferts in such express Terms, as to afcribe universal Empire and Sovereignty to him. It was the Pfalmist's Prediction, that he should have all things put in subjection under his feet; and that even his enemies should be made his footstool. Accordingly we are assured, in the new Testament, that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*. Angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto him f. The very Devils themselves, however they

^{*} Phil. ii. 9. 10. + 1 Pet. iii. 22.

VI. he having spoiled those Principalities and Powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over Them *. Over Men, the greatest of the Sons of Men, his Dominion is so absolute, that he is from thence called King of

KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS +.

From hence are the Kings of the Earth exhorted to kiss the Son, in token of Subjection. His faithful Subjects and Servants he protects and rewards; but as for his Enemies, and those, who would not that be should reign over them, -be rules them with a rod of iron, and breaks them in pieces like a Potter's veffel. Thus is he not only (as the Apostle styles him) the first born of every creature; but more especially (as the same Apostle goes on) the head of the body, the Church : in which his Empire and Government is more remarkably conspicuous. To That, he prescribes Laws; in That, he ordains, fubstitutes, and dispenses forth the Means of that Salvation, he has wrought for us. So that, altho' the Church be not now confined to any fingle Nation, as heretofore it was to that of Ifrael; yet the spiritual Privileges we receive by Christ, are as much confined as ever to those, who are admitted into that mystical Society, and thereby become more immediately fubject to his special Government, and are taken into his Protection.

^{*} Col. ii. 15. † Rev. xix. 16. ‡ Col. i. 15. 18.

This,

This, in short, is the Account the Scrip-SERM. tures give us, of the present Condition of our Saviour's Kingdom. And from his very Birth was he invested with this Regal Character. For so the Eastern Magi acknowledged him, to be born, King of the Jews; the Angel, which appeared to the Shepherds at his Birth, expressly affirmed him to be Christ the Lord; And a greater than the Angel yet, declared, that to this end be was born, and for this cause be came into the world; that he should be a King: and in the Text, afferts his Divine Right to that high Dignity; for that the Father had already given bim authority to execute judgment.

But yet, however he were thus by Right and Defignation King; we see, he chose rather to forbear the Exercise of his Power: the greatest Part of his Life he passed in a private and obscure Manner; and tho' after he had entred on his Ministry, the Miracles he wrought displayed his Power, and shewed that Nature it self was obedient to his Word; yet these belonged rather to his Prophetical, than to his Regal Office; as being wrought in Confirmation of his Doctrine, and defigned to engage the Affections and Obedience of the People. The humble Appearance, which he made, was as a Sort of Cloud or Veil, thrown over the Brightness of his Majesty: and however some Rays of it might thine forth in his Miracles; yet the full H 3 ManiSERM. Manifestations of his Royalty were reserved, as more proper for his State of Exaltation.

From hence it comes to pass, that his Investiture with this Character, is sometimes spoken of, as tho 'twere subsequent to his Resurrection: because, whatever were his Right before; the Exercise of his Power did commence afterwards. 'Twas then, he declared to his Disciples, that all power was given unto him, in heaven and in earth*; then, that St. Peter professed before the Jewish Sanhedrin, that God bad exalted with his right band, that Jesus, whom they had crucified, to be a Prince and a Saviour +. 'Twas then, that our Saviour commissioned the Disciples, as his proper Substitutes, to govern, as well as to instruct his Church; and fent forth his Holy Spirit to inspire them with those Gifts and Graces, which might qualify them for

And his Instructions too, let it be added, have the Force of Laws; and are enforced therefore with the proper Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments. In which two Parts consists the whole sovereign Authority; the legislative Power, in the Prescription of Laws; and the executive, in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments. The last of these I take to be sufficiently implied, in that Power of Judgment, which, in the Text, our Lord has afferted to himself, and which will be

Matth, xxviii. 18. + Acts v. 30, 31.

because he is the Son of Man. 103
yet better understood, by our proceeding to Serm.
the VI.

2. Second Thing proposed under this Head, viz. to shew in what respects more particularly, this fudgment does consist, or is

executed by him.

Now whatever Notice he takes of the Observation of Violation of his Laws; whether it be by chastifing his Servants for the Failures of their Lives; by granting Absolution and Pardon to the Penitent; by fending his Spirit to comfort them, upon the Difcharge of their Duty; or by adding such temporal Comforts and Conveniencies, as may be proper for their farther Encouragement: or whether, on the other hand, it be, by punishing the Wicked and Disobedient; either by the spiritual Censures of his Substitutes on Earth; or more immediately by bodily Difeafes; by croffing their Defigns, and preventing that Mischief, they intended to his Church; or by delivering them over to a reprobate Mind, and leaving them to the Darkness and Obstinacy of their own Hearts; withdrawing from them that gracious Influence, which alone can enlighten and direct them: All these are the proper Acts of that Judgment, which he here fays, he has Authority to execute. For there can be no doubt, but 'tis the Judge's Business to put the Sanctions of the Law in Execution, to punish the Unruly, and protect the Good. Accordingly we find in the

SERM the Revelation, that as well the Chastifements and Deliverance of the Faithful, as the Punishment of Infidels and Rebels, is ascribed to Chrift, who is faid to hold in his right band the seven Stars, i. e. the seven Bishops, or chief Governors of the Afian Churches: and to walk in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks, or of those Churches themfelves *.

> But the most signal Instance of this Authority, is That future and final Judgment, which the Scriptures teach us, that our Lord shall execute in Person, when he shall descend from Heaven on a Cloud, in visible and dreadful Majesty; and all Mankind shall be fummoned to appear before his Judgment-Seat, that the Justice of his Government may be conspicuous and made known to all, and every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he bath done, whether it be good or bad: when he shall pronounce. Sentence upon all Men, according to their works; admitting his faithful Servants, the found Members of his mystical Body, to a Participation of his own Glory; and condemning the Wicked (fuitably to their Demerit) to abide an Eternity of Shame and Misery.

> I shall conclude this Head, when I have added in the and add and asim as an of canada

Third Place, a brief Account of the SERM. Derivation of this Power of Judgment to our Saviour Christ. He tells us; it was the Father had given bim this Authority. And fo indeed the Scripture speaks of his Exaltation to the Regal Office; that God bas exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour; and that God has anointed bim with the oil of gladness, and set his King upon bis boly Hill of Sion. To the same Purpose is That in the Prophecy of Daniel, that the Son of man was brought before the Ancient of days, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed*. And yet more particularly, with regard to his future Coming to Judgment, we learn from St. Paul; that God has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteoufness, by that man whom he hath ordained +; and from St. Peter likewise, to the same Purpose, that this is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead ‡.

Twere useless, as well as tedious, to enumerate the Proofs of this particular, which they who read their Bibles cannot help observing, of themselves. The Difficulty is, to reconcile this matter with the important Doctrine of our Saviour's Divinity, and shew

Dan. vii. 13, 14. † Acts xvii 31. ‡ Chap. x. 42.

SERM, how he, who is by Nature God, should have this Power communicated and derived to him from another.

> But this Difficulty will admit of various Answers. For first, it may be allowed, that the Divine Nature and Powers effential to it. are communicated and derived from the Father, without supposing the Son to be dependent and precarious; fo long as this Communication itself is maintained to be not arbitrary, but necessary, as Light from the Sun; nor yet to have had a Beginning, before which he had no fuch Powers; but to have had a

necessary Existence from all Efernity.

Again, in the next Place, this may be understood with relation to the Method, in which God is pleased to manifest his Nature to us, and affert the Dignity and Honour of each Person subsisting in it. For this reason is every Person manifested under some special Title or Character: And to use the Words of a judicious Author, " the Father (whose " Honour had been sufficiently secured, un-" der the fewish Dispensation, and could " not but be fo under the Christian also) " being as much concerned for the Honour " of his Son, had been pleased to commit all " Judgment to him, for leave the Exercise of it to run in his name particularly] " for "this very End and Purpole, that Men " might thereby fee and know, that the " Son, as well as the Father, was fudge of all " all the earth; and might from thence be SERM. "convinced, how reasonable it was, and how VI.

"highly it concerned them, to pay all the fame Honour to the Son, which they had

" hitherto believed to belong to the Father

" only *.

Or lafty, if this Communication of Power be explained, in a lower and precarious Sense; yet still the Difficulty may be solved, as far as our present Argument is concerned in it: when we remember, that he who is thus by Nature God, did likewise condescend to become Man; and by a mysterious Union of the Divine and Human Nature in the fame Person, to take upon himself the Office and Character of the Meshah: that he who was, as touching his Godhead, uncreated and equal to the Father; was yet, as touching his Manhood, a created Being, and inferior to him: For tho' the Divine Nature could receive no Accessions of Power, yet the Human might: nor was it possible indeed that he, considered as the Christ of God, should have a Name, which is above every name; or be placed far above all other Creatures, and involted with the Right and Authority of Judgment, without having fome new Privileges bestowed on his Humanity, to which it had no Claim or Title in its own Nature. However, therefore, as God, he was both Supreme and Omnipotent, and so incapable of any derivative Ex-

^{*} Dr. Waterland's Defense of Queries p. 279.

SERM, cellencies or Powers, imparted in time, and by an arbitrary Cause; yet as he was the Son of Man, the buman Nature was affurned to the Divine, and he might, nay must, in That, derive his Powers, from a prior and superior

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Not that the human Nature is capable of receiving the infinite Perfections of the Deity. That which is created must needs be finite. But when the Divine and human Nature were, in an unconceivable manner, united in the fame Person; then he, who had those Attributes, was Man as well as God; and the buman was admitted to a fuitable participation of those Honours, which cannot possibly be separated from the Divine. Nay, and for this very reason it was, our Saviour assures us, he had this Authority given him, to execute judgment, BECAUSE be is the Son of Man. Which leads me in order to the

III. THIRD and last General Head proposed, namely, to explain the Dependance, which these two have on one another; or how That authority is here faid to have been given him for this reason, BECAUSE be is the Son of Man. and bala to the month to the

And here, if we confider this Character of the Son of Man, as it implies his being very Man, or really partaker of the human Nature; it does, in this respect, suggest to us a very proper qualification of him, for his receiving this authority to execute judgment. For he · Bullet

may, under this veil of Flesh, display himself SERM. in visible Majesty, and appear with all that VI. folemn Pomp and Ceremony, which is fo apt to strike our outward Senses, and engage our Reverence and Attention. Or if thundrings and lightnings, without a visible appearance, might be thought sufficient to awe and terrify; yet the addition of This, at least, is proper to engage the trust and confidence of them. who have been careful to approve their Consciences before him. And this sure it cannot fail to do, when they reflect, that he is himfelf no stranger to the Frailties and Weaknesfes of human Nature; and therefore will be fure to make all gracious allowances for the involuntary flips of this imperfect State, as he is at present ready to send forth his holy Spirit to affift and comfort us, to keep us from falling, or restore us afterwards. For what the Author to the Hebrews has observ'd of him, in his Prieftly Character, may, with the fame reason, be applied to him in his Regal. We bave not fuch a KING, or JUDGE, as cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without fin . And in that he himself bath suffer'd being tempted, be is able and disposed to succour them that are tempted +.

By all this it may appear, how fit it is, that Jesus should be made our Judge upon this very account, BECAUSE be is the Son of Man:

^{*} Heb. iv. 15. † Chap. ii. 18.

S BRIM, because he is partaker of the same nature VI. with our felves; capable of differenting him - felf to our corporeal Senfes, and confcious, by experience in his own Perfon, of those Frailties and Infirmities we labour under. And yet, this is but the least and lowest Sense or Importance of the Phrase If we would diff cern the true Force and Emphasis of this Parfage, of the reason here given for our bleffed Saviour's investiture with this power of Judgment; we must stop to recapitulate a little, and recollect what farther is intended, or meant of him, under this Character. And That, in fhort, has been shewn clearly to amount to This; that he was the promifed Meffiah, That Seed of the Woman, which, by fubmitting to have his own heet bruned by the Serpent, was in the end to bruile the Serpent's head. From hence the Inference is easy, why he should therefore be invest ted with this Authority to execute Judgment. For who fitter to reign, than He that had the right of conquest? Who worthier of the highest Honours, the Pather could bestow up on him, than He that vanquish'd his most deadly Enemies; and by humbling him felf even to the Death of the Cross, had poiled Principalities and Powers, and had triumph'd over them? From his Humiliation and Obedience, St. Paul accounts for the reason of his Exaltation: Wherefore, fayshe, God hath bigbly exalted bim, and given bim a name which

which is above every name, that at the name SERM. of Jesus every knee should bow *. And again, VI. we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the suffering of death, crowned

with glory and honour +.

But this argument will be yet much stronger, when it is confider'd, that this his conquest over the Devil, was obtain'd by virtue of his Union with the Divinity. No Creature, as fuch, was equal to this mighty Enterprise; to fubdue the Powers of Darkness, and rescue the miserable Captives detain'd by them. This must be the work, of an Almighty arm; and therefore the fame Person, who could do this, might likewise have Authority to execute fudgment. For though no meer Creature is qualified for fuch an Office, which requires Omnifcience to understand the Cause, and an Almighty Power to execute the Sentence yet he was well qualified in both these respects. in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and who, as he became in time the Son of Man, had been from all Eternity the Son of God

Once more, this Conquest of the Devil, and overthrow of his Kingdom, expressed under the Figure of bruising the Serpent's head, does not only imply such Powers in our. Saviour, as must qualify him for this exercise of Judgment; but it more immediately implies, his actual investiture with the Regal authority, and particularly with the power of Judg-

^{*} Phil. ii. 9, 10. + Heb. ii. 9.

SERM. ment. For was he to bruise the Serpent's head, as well by redeeming fuch, as would fubmit to him from that miserable Bondage, in which they were detain'd; as by fubjecting them that should refuse their own Mercy, together with the Devil, who seduced them, to the greater Condemnation? This must suppose him invested with a Power to Pardon or Condemn; to protect fuch, as should dutifully fabmit to his Authority; and to execute Vengeance on his Enemies. So that, fince all this was the proper Office of the Son of Man, or That promised Seed of the Woman, who was to engage with the Serpent and his Seed; and by difarming him of all his Force, to rescue Mankind from his Vassalage, and repair the Damage we had otherwise sustain'd by the Fall of our first Ancestors: we see from hence, the necessity of his receiving the executive Power, to dispense Rewards and Punishments; we see, why the right of Judgment should be made the special Character of the Son, rather than of the Father, or the Holy Ghoft; and how strongly that reason concludes, which our bleffed Saviour urges, that he has Authority given him to execute Judgment, for this very reason; BECAUSE be is the Son of Man; because he had assumed the human Nature, as that promifed Seed of our first Parents, who came to redeem us, both from Sin and Punishment.

And now let these Considerations, both of SERM. our Judge's Office and Perfections, make us VI. careful to approve ourselves before him; and to look up with confidence, when we have done our Duty with fincerity. For, is he the Judge, that must acquit or condemn us at the last day? It is certainly our Interest to behave ourselves, in such a manner as may gain his Approbation; fince upon that, depends our Happiness or Misery to all Eternity. Is he again omniscient and infallible? Let us be very careful, how we prepare ourselves to pass the Scrutiny; fince there can be no hope of concealing from him our most fecret Sins; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do. Laftly, Is he merciful and faithful? And has he felt the Infirmities of human Flesh? Let this inspire us with humble Confidence, that he will not rigidly exact beyond our Abilities; but knows how to allow for those Weaknesses and Frailties, which are inseparable from our Nature: and where the Heart is willing and fincere, will graciously accept of our Endeavours; tho, the Obedience perform'd be but too vifibly imperfect.

To Him, with the Father, &c.

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DU LOCKET STEEL BOOK OF THE STEEL BE Short Star S in the Night CHRIST's BIRTH good Tidings of great of quiet of in the foy to all People. Care of Adam the Irrafita Exilig Judgu 13/24 Angeli also had LUKE ii. 10, 11. beer the Mire And the Angel Said unto them, fear not: for ton of God. Ven behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. The Perfor he For unto you is born this day, in the city of ken of deferil David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Ist Perform is Good. HAT which the Prophets with unanimous confent foretold, and the holy Patriarchs expected; who tho' they had not themselves received the promises, yet rd. ... fai having feen them afar off by Faith, (which is com Hick an inthe evidence of things not feen) were perfuaded Prodictions of them and embraced them *: Even That, born not for which from the Beginning, God had deterfor himself the promise, which God made unto the fathers, be bath fulfilled unto us their children +, that he would fend his Son; the Anniversary of whose Nativity we this day celebrate. Heb. xi. 13. + Acts xiii, 32. 33. He was form of Jane of the Office of A.D. Night Thingstone No. 14 A DAY,

A DAY, which at once requires of us the SERM. deepest Humiliation, and the most exalted VII. Praise! That such should be the Sins of Mankind, as nothing but the Blood of the Son of God could expiate, calls for our most hearty Sorrow, and Contrition, and Repentance. But that in this Extremity God should so love the world, as to send forth his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life; is enough to turn our beaviness into joy, and our Mourning into Songs of Thansgiving: So that we may well be struck with Admiration and Joy, at the found of these Words of the Angel to the Shepherds, when he said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. In difcourfing upon which Words, I shall take occasion

I. To explain the Message, on which the Angel was sent, as it is expressed in the latter Verse of the Text—unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which

is Christ the Lord.

II. To infift upon the great Advantage and Importance of this Message, as it is intimated in the Presace with which 'tis introduced: -- And the Angel said unto them, fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. And then, I 2

SERM. III. and lastly, to make some practical

VII. Reflections, and conclude.

I. FIRST then, I am to explain the Message, on which the Angel was sent, as it is expressed in the latter Verse of the Text—unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. In which Words there are four things, which deserve to be considered, viz.

1. The Character of the Person, whom this Message concerns, a Saviour, which is

Christ the Lord.

2. The Manner of his Coming; he is here faid to be born.

3. The Time of his Nativity. And,

4. The Place

1. First, the Character of the Person, whom this Message concerns, a Saviour, which is

Christ the Lord.

When our first Parents lost their State of Innocence, they forseited, together with That,
their Title to eternal Life. And since they
had hereby offended against infinite Goodness, and offered an Affront at once to all
the Divine Attributes and Perfections; it was
impossible they should ever make Reparation
for their Fault, or satisfy that Justice, which
they had offended. The original Rectitude
of their Nature being lost, they contracted
from thenceforth a most prevalent Corruption, and unavoidable Propensity to Evil;
which

which is propagated from them, down to their SERM. late Posterity. So that the whole Race of VII. Mankind is involved in the fatatal Confequences of their Fall; and had been liable, together with them, to God's Wrath and Damnation; if no way had been found, for Satisfaction to be made to his offended Justice. But behold the Goodness and Severity of God! his Severity towards Sin, expressed in his refusing to pardon it, without fuch Satisfaction made, as being worthy of his Majesty and Honour to accept, might secure the Esteem and Veneration of his Laws: His Goodness, in condefcending to most gracious Terms of Reconciliation and Agreement; to covenant for Man's Impunity, and accept of a vicarious Punishment. Thus immediately upon the Fall he promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's bead*. Upon this feed of the woman, we elsewhere find, it pleased him to lay the Iniquity of us all. He underwent the Punishment, which our Sins had deferved, and by his Stripes alone we can be bealed.

This is that Saviour, of whose Birth the Angels brought the Shepherds News. And fince such and so express are the Declarations made, in Scripture, of his Mediatorial Office; it may be just matter of Wonder and Surprize, any Creatures should be found such perfect Contradictions to themselves, even

* Gen. iii. 15.

SERM. whilft they most pretend to Reason; as to confess the Authority of these Scriptures, and yet deny the Virtue of his Satisfaction. How weak a Subterfuge must it be, and how little agreeable to the Style of Scripture, to suppose, that the whole Scene of his bitter Agony and Death, had no higher Ends in View, than fuch as these, --- to confirm the Truths he had delivered, by his unshaken Constancy; -and to fet us an Example of Humility and Refignation, and of a resolute Perseverance in the Profession of our Faith? As if it were in this Sense, the Scripture tells us, that be gave bimself a ransom for all! As if thus he could be faid to have died for Us, (who must otherwise have died eternally ourselves) to have born our fins upon the cross, and by his Blood to have expiated or made Atonement for them!

That he was thus to make Expiation or Atonement for the Sins of Mankind, is implied in the Name bestowed upon him in the Text, THE CHRIST. A Name given him upon account of those Offices, to which he was anointed by the Father; as a Prophet, to teach and to instruct his Church; as a King, to rule and govern it; and as a Priest, lastly, to offer up himself once for all, a perfect and unblemished Sacrifice, and to make for ever Intercession for us.

But in regard; no man can nedeem his brother, or make atonement unto God for him;

it remains, that the Person thus undertaking to SERM. redeem us, and accordingly accepted of God VII. for our Redeemer, must be more than Man. -And therefore it is not without a particular Emphasis, that the Angel has added to the Character of this Saviour, in the Text, not only that he is Christ, but that he is Christ the Lord. The Christ, or anointed of the Lord, is a Title due to God's Vicegerents upon Earth. But the Character of CHRIST THE LORD, is more exalted and fublime, and belongs only to him, whom the Prophet calls THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; the Apostle calls, the Lord from beaven; and who being coequal and coeternal with the Father, is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords. For so we find the Word LORD, both in the new, and in very valuable Versions of the old Testament, and (as is probably thought) in the Masorethical Punctation of the Hebrew itself, (we find it, I fay,) substituted instead of that incommunicable Name, which is never given to any one, who by Nature is not God. But how this Lord from Heaven, this eternal God, should undergo the Punishment due to finful men, is a Mystery far exceeding our Capacity: and yet capable of some Sort of Explication, if we would attend to the

2. Second Thing to be confidered, namely, the Manner of his Coming, as described here in the Text, where he is said to be born. The way for him to redeem Mankind was by

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becom-

VII.

SERM. becoming Man bimself: that so Satisfaction might be made to the Divine Justice, in the fame Nature, in which it was offended. Of fuch Importance is it, that we believe our Saviour's Manhood, and not with the Marcionite Hereticks of old, suppose that he had only a fantastick Body, and received no real Substance of the bleffed Virgin. For that the Divine Nature, which is impaffible, should undergo the Punishment due to finful Men, is not only inexplicable and unconceivable, but even blasphemous and full of Contradiction. And yet on the other hand, that an imaginary Suffering should have a real Efficacy for our Atonement, is equally monstrous and absurd. And therefore we have Cause to rejoice, that there is Evidence abundantly sufficient to convince a fober and confidering Man, that our bleffed Saviour was "perfect Man, of a " reasonable Soul, and human Flesh subsist-" ing." at the essotial bringly line

We are affured, that he was conceived and born, circumcifed and baptized; that he held frequent Conferences with his Disciples, and the other Yews; that he eat and drank openly and in Public; that he shewed some Expressions both of Sorrow and of Joy; that he was examined by the Roman Governor, buffeted and scourged by his Soldiers; and above all, that he was crucified at last, and expiring upon the Cross, left his dead Body to the Mercy and Examination of his Enemies. So

I 4 that that if either the Partiality, which may be SERM. thought to have swayed his Disciples; or the VII. Indifference, with which his Doctrine was received among the Heathens; or the Virulence and Malice, with which the Jews were prejudiced against it, could have discovered him to have been a man no otherwise than in appearance, or in outward shew; either his Friends must have given a different Account from what they do; or else their Doctrine had only served to carry on a spiritual Juggle and Imposture: and his enemies, no doubt, would gladly have embraced any Opportunity of discovering the cheat.

Nor is it less to be considered, that He had a human Soul, as well as Body of Flesh. This is included in the Notion of a perfect Man, (as was before intimated) and must be carefully afferted; lest we fall into the Heresy of Apollinarius, who supposed the Place of his Soul to be supplied by his Divinity, and consequently denied the whole human Nature to have undergone the Punishment, which the whole human Nature had incurred. A point of Heterodoxy, which some of our modern Arians have adopted into their System!

But whilst we are thus careful to maintain, that Christ is Man, we are not to forget, that he is God too. 'Tis upon This the Satisfaction and Merit of his Death depends. 'Tis This, which gives us a comfortable Prospect

VII. nity of his Person being such, as made the Punishment he underwent, tho' not precisely the same we had deserved; yet accepted instead of it, and sufficient to procure our Impunity; and whose Merit, moreover, is sufficient to procure us a Reward of immortal

Happiness and Glory. 1100 no 401 page 1209

When we affert thus his Divine and human Nature, we must take great heed we destroy not that Unity of Person, which is required in the Christ. For if we so divide his Natures, as to make of them two distinct Persons, which is the Heresy charged upon Nestorius; we shall persectly destroy the whole Scheme of our Redemption: Since thus it will follow, that he was not God who suffered: And if meer Man be unable to make Atonement for us, and work out our Salvation; it will follow from hence farther, that He who suffered, did not atone for us, nor work out our Salvation.

This hypostatical Union of both Natures in him, is indeed too wonderful to be conceived. A Knowledge it is, too excellent for us; we cannot attain unto it. How God Almighty, who fills all places with his Prefence, but is circumscribed by none; who is infinite and incomprehensible, unmeasurable, unconfined, and to whom even our Imagination, luxuriant as it is, can set no Bounds; How He, I say, should be cloath-

ed with a human Body, or inclosed in the SERM. Virgin's Womb, i. e. should be personally VII. united to the human Nature, must be confessed mysterious, and above the reach of our Capacity. But this ought never to be urged, as an Argument against it: Since even the Union of Soul and Body in ourselves, certain and uncontested tho' it be, will yet be found, if we would narrowly examine it, to be unconceivable. We are, in the Pfalmift's Expression, fearfully and wonderfully made, not only in respect of the Formation of our Bodies, but of the Creation and Union of our Souls. And therefore we may wonder indeed, but we must not think it incredible, that the hypostatical Union of the Divine and human Nature in Christ, should exceed not only our Expression, but even our Understanding and Imagination: Since the nearest Illustration we can give of it, is far short of it indeed; but an undeniable Mystery, which we carry constantly about us. "For " as the reasonable Soul and Flesh is one " Man, fo God and Man is one Chrift."

consider the Time of his Nativity, unto you is born, this Day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

This was that Fulness of Time, when God had determined to send forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law. The fewish Commonwealth was now about to be dis-

SERM. folved, having continued long enough to fulfil the Prophecy of Jacob, that the Scepter - Should not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh, or Meffiab, should come. Their Temple was not yet demolished by the Romans; nor was it confiftent with God's Veracity it should; till this defire of all nations was come, and had filled that bouse with glory, greater than Solomon's could boast of. His Harbinger, St. John Baptift, who was to introduce him, and prepare his Way, was born fix months before. And by that time Jesus himself should come to thirty Years of Age, the fixty nine weeks, foretold by Daniel, would expire, at the Conclusion whereof he was to enter upon his Office; and both by his own Preaching, and that of his Apostles, to confirm the covenant with many for one week, i. e. for feven Years longer, in the midst of which space, be was to be cut off himself, and so to make the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease; i. e. by the perfect and fufficient Sacrifice of himfelf upon the Cross, to put an End to the ceremonial Institutions of the Law of Moses. Thus did the Time of Christ's coming into the World, answer exactly to those Prophecies, by which it was foretold. And accordingly it is fufficiently clear, from the History of the new Testament, that the Jews of that Time did eagerly expect the Approach of their Meffiah.

A STOREGOVER LEAD

Perhaps, it might not be improper to take SERM. Notice farther, upon this Occasion, that the VII. Day of our Saviour's Nativity, however difputed by some learned Men, has yet been judged by others, to answer precisely to the eighth of the Kalends of January, (which is the twenty fifth day of December) in the Roman Kalendar. This Iadd, not because I think the Church has not Authority sufficient, to appoint and fet apart a Day, for the Celebration of this inestimable Mercy, even the' the precise Time of it were not exactly known; but because it has been urged by some, as an Objection against any Celebration of his Nativity at all, that the exact time of it cannot Which yet feems to be enough be fixed. confirm'd for a matter of this nature; if we will allow any weight (and some weight surely ought to be allowed) to the Tradition of the Church: it being certain (as a learned Antiquary of our Nation observes *) that on the twenty-fifth day of December, That Feast hath ever been setled, in the western Church; from whence the eastern also anciently receiv'd it.

The Exception, which some learned Menhave made against it, from the consideration of the Courses of the Priests in the service of the Temple; by computing from the time of Judas Maccabeus's Dedication of the Temple, to the time when Zacharias was struck

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^{*} Selden's Theanthropos.

VII. could be fure, both what Term of Years passified between these two Occurrences; and with what Class of the Priests, Judas began his Instauration. For if either, the Number of Years be in dispute, (as I conceive it must) or Judas began with another Class of Priests, than they suppose he did; (which at least is not improbable;) then their Argument from these Courses is not sufficient to overthrow the Credit and Authority of that Tradition, against which it is brought; and so is utterly incapable of in-

ferring their Conclusion.

4. Fourthly, I come now to the last thing to be consider'd under this Head, namely, the place of our Saviour's Nativity; Unto you is born this day, in the City of DAVID. a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Thus did it please God, that he who is described, as of the boufe and lineage of David, and of whom David himself was but a Type, should have his Birth in the fame City where David had, to make the parallel more compleat and exact. But there is, in truth, yet something farther in the case. For this City of David was Bethlebem; whence we find his Father called Jeffe the Bethlebemite *. And from hence it was, the Prophet Micab had foretold, be should come forth, that was to be ruler in Ifrael, whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting +. Which Prophecy, tho'

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^{* 1} Sam. xvi. 1. + Mic. v. 2.

fome have absurdly enough understood it of SERM. Zerubbabel, was yet sufficiently known by VII. the ancient Fewisb Church, to refer to the Messiab. For so, when Herod assembled the chief Priests and Scribes of the people, to demand of them where Christ should be born : we find them unanimous in this resolution of his Question, that he should be born in Betbleham of Judea: for thus it is written in the Prophet, And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the Princes of Judab : for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Ifrael *. And afterwards the Yews appear to have understood it, as the fense of Scripture, not only that Christ cometh of the feed of David, but likewife out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was #. And fince Hebrew names are usually fignificant, and imposed to some special end or purpose; perhaps it would not be amiss to take notice. that the name of this City fignifies the boufe or place of bread. And what Place fitter for his Birth and reception, who was, and is the living bread, which came down from beaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die +?

Thus far, of the Message upon which the Angel was sent; which was the FIRST thing

proposed. I come now to the

II. SECOND Head of Discourse, to insist upon the great Advantage and Importance of this Message; as it is intimated in the Presace

^{*} Mat. ii. 4, 5, 6. | John vii. 42. + John vi. 51, 52. with

SERM. with which it is introduced: And the Angel VII. Said unto them, fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to

all people.

The Dignity of the Messenger alone might fuggest his Message to be business of Importance. For those ministring Spirits use not to be fent upon Errands of little or no Consequence. But yet it is not necessary, that the import of their Errand should always be matter of Advantage and Joy. And therefore it was not wholly without reason, that the Shepherds felt some Apprehensions and Misgivings at the fight of this glorious Appearance; and that when the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, they were (as the Evangelist informs us) fore afraid. To correct these Misgivings, and raise their Spirits from the prefent Consternation and Despondency, He begins his Discourse to them with a fear not; and then proceeds to give them such a general Description of the News, he was about to deliver, as plainly shews he wanted words fit to fet forth and express so great a Benefit. For behold (fays he in the first Place, to raise their expectations, behold) I bring you good tidings.

And furely to men, who are fensible of their own Sins and Corruptions, the News of a Saviour being born must needs be highly acceptable. For if we resect upon that dread-

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ful Punishment, which is due to our Sins, SERM. and which it had not been possible for us to VII. escape by any power of our own; from which the satisfaction of Christ's death has rescued us, and fet us free; and instead whereof, his Merits have purchased for us everlasting Happinefs. Sure we shall have reason to confess, that this is a faithful faying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to fave Sinners. And therefore it was very proper to add farther, that thefe good tidings were tidings of Joy. For tho every good or happy Event be, in some degree, a matter of Joy; yet there are some of fuch a nature, as would not have occasioned us any Disturbance or Uneasiness, if they had never happen'd. But the birth of a Saviour, to recover lost and miserable Men, to redeem them from Damnation, to reinstate them in God's Favour, and restore them to a glorious Immortality, is a Mercy, the absence whereof must have created Sorrow, endless and unfpeakable. And therefore the Angel very properly proceeds, in his gradation, to reprefent it as matter of great Joy. For where indeed can we find a greater occasion for our Joy, than the Contemplation of that Mifery, from which this Saviour refcued us, and that immortal Happiness, to which we are entitled by his Merits? If the greatness of the Benefit bestowed may be allowed, to justify the greatness of that Person's Joy, who VOL. II. receives

VII. greatest Benefit, that ever was bestowed upon Mankind, must be traduced and vilified, if it may not be allowed to pass for good tidings of great Joy. The Patriarch Abraham was glad, when with a stedfast Faith be beheld this day, though far distant and to come. And behold, with what unusual Joy, the holy Baptist was transported, when, as yet unborn, he leap'd within his Mother's Womb, as the blessed Virgin gave account of her immaculate Conception.

But because the extent of any Favour, is an Advantage by no means to be neglected; it ought to be consider d farther, that the Subject of these Tidings was not only superlatively good, but likewise diffusive of itself; not concerning this or that Man only, but the whole race of Mankind. They are good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE: High and low, rich and poor, one with another *: All Ages, Countries and Conditions are concern'd in them.

The shortness of the time will not allow me to enlarge upon the Controversies, which are moved, of universal or restrain'd Redemption. And so clear indeed is the whole tenor of the Gospel, and so express the Doctrine of our Church in this Particular; as may, I hope, make any enlargement upon it needless in this Place. If the Favour were confin'd within a narrow compass, perhaps this might be

Pfal. xlix. 2.

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matter of Joy indeed to some, but it must SERM. grieve the rest. Or indeed, I know not, whe- VII. ther any would find solid Satisfaction in it for the prefent; fince tho' all might labour and strive after it, yet they must do it all with Whereas now we have equal uncertainty. fufficient encouragement to work: because no one, who works fincerely, shall fail of his Reward. For this grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, bath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed bope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ ||. Which brings me, in order, to the

III. THIRD and last thing proposed, namely, to make some Reflections upon what has

been said. And

r. First, from the mystical manner of the hypostatick Union of two Natures in Christ, we may learn, not to expect, we should be able to comprehend the Mysteries of our Religion; but to rest satisfied with those Notices of them, which God has been pleased to reveal to us. It is indeed our Duty, and ordinarily "necessary to Salvation: to believe rightly "the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For "the right Faith is, that we believe and con-"fess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of

∦ Tit. ii. 11, &c.

" God, is God and man; God of the Sub-

SERM." stance of the Father, begotten before the VII. "worlds: and Man of the Substance of his

"Mother, born in the world; Perfect God, and perfect man: of a reasonable soul, and

" human flesh subsisting; Equal to the Fa-

" ther, as touching his Godhead: and infe-

"rior to the Father, as touching his Manhood. Who altho' he be God and Man:

" yet he is not two, but one Christ; One;

" not by conversion of the Godhead into

" flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into

" God; One altogether; not by confusion of

Substance: but by unity of Person. For

" as the reasonable soul and flesh is one "Man: so God and Man is one Christ *."

Thus far, we have grounds from Scripture to proceed, in the Explication of this Mystery. But there is a great deal of difference between believing a thing true, and understanding bow it should be fo. Thro' faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; fo that things which are feen, were not made of things which do appear +. And yet how, this whole visible Creation should be formed out of nothing, is unaccountable; and must be referred to the Omnipotence of the Creator. How much less should we expect to comprehend the Nature of God, and find out the Almighty to perfection? To make us believe an Article, nothing more is required than sufficient Evidence of its being true. And what higher Evidence can possibly be had, Athanaf. Creed. + Heb. xi. 3.

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than the infallible Testimony of God, who SERM. can neither err nor deceive? But in order to comprehend and explain the Nature of fuch Truths, there is many times wanting a more extensive Knowledge, and deeper Penetration, than our Nature is capable of attaining: And therefore if we can make out, that They are contained in the Scriptures, and that those Scriptures are the word of God; what matter, whether we be able to explain, bow thefe things can be? Let this only put us upon exclaiming with St. Paul, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! bow unsearchable are his judgments, (we may add likewise his Nature and Attributes) and bis ways past finding out!

2. Secondly, Since Christ was given to redeem us from our Sins, let us learn from hence to behave ourselves like people, that are sensible of so great a Benefit. Gratitude alone to this Almighty Benefactor, should require and exact of us a willing Obedience to his Precepts, and Observance of his Laws. But our engagements to this will be yet much stronger, in point of Interest, when we consider, that even that Benefit it felf will be quite frustrated and lost without it. For we are perfectly mistaken, if we imagine the Satisfaction and Merits of our Saviour Christ, were defigned to indulge us in a lazy and unactive Security. He died indeed to redeem us from that Sentence of Damnation, which we could K 3

SERM. not have escaped; and to procure us such gracious Affiftance, as may enable us to obferve those Conditions, upon which the Happiness, he has purchased for us, is suspended. But still it is in our own power, thro' God's Grace, to observe; or thro' our own Corruption and Depravity, to neglect those Conditions. And if we should neglect them, the gracious Defign of his Death is frustrated, as to our own particulars. For tho' he be indeed the propitiation for the fins of the whole world, and his Birth was therefore good tidings of great joy to all people; yet this ought to be interpreted, with regard not to the Effect; but the Virtue of his Sufferings; to that Effect, which they were capable of producing; not that which they did actually produce. He died a Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole world, and to restore fallen mankind to the Favour and loving Kindness of God. And therefore all Men have abundant reason to rejoice. But still it is left to themselves, whether they will accept this Benefit or no; i.e. whether they will comply with those Terms, upon which only it is vouchfafed.

3. Thirdly, and to conclude, it may be proper to take Notice farther, upon this occasion, with what fort of Joy we ought to folemnize and celebrate this Festival. The Benefit we commemorate extends both to our Souls and Bodies. And therefore it is reasonable, that God should be glorified in both. In

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our Bodies, not only as they are concerned to SERM. express the Devotion of our Souls in the Worthin of God; but likewife by making fuch Provision for their Sustenance, as may conduce more particularly to create Chearfulness and Joy. Always provided, this to be done within the bounds of Decencyand Moderation. For whenever we exceed them, (which, alas, there is reason to believe is frequently the case) we are so far from glorifying God with our bodies, that we abuse them, rather to

dishonour and despise him.

And give me leave to add, that the Rich ought not, on this occasion especially, to be unmindful of the Poor, but (as it is faid of the Jews, after their return from Captivity) whilft they eat the fat and drink the fweet themselves; let them likewise take care to fend portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared . Let not the Memory of a Saviour's Nativity, to redeem us from Damnation, be less esteem'd by us, than their temporal Deliverance from Captivity at Babylon. Let there be no cries of Widows or Orphans heard among us, to diffurb the Joy of this facred Solemnity. But as the Mercy we commemorate is matter of Joy to all People, in its own Nature: So let them, who have Ability, in fact promote it in their feveral Stations, by making the Widow's Heart to fing for Joy.

Neh. viit. 10.

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VII. to be spiritual, such as may imply a grateful Sense of this invaluable Mercy, and be productive of a good Life. Without This, the service of our Lips, and all outward expressions of Joy will be of no Value. It is This! which makes our Services, impersect as they are, yet accepted of God in the beloved ||. This! which is the spiritual Life of the Saints here on earth, and shall constitute their most transporting Happiness in another life to all Eter-

nity.

With this Disposition of Soul therefore, let us now approach to the holy Table, where we may behold the Son of God (who was born, as on this Day, at Betblebem) evidently fet forth crucified for us. There! may we receive that Bread, which cometh down from beaven, and is capable of nourishing our Souls unto eternal Life: There! That Wine, which may put true Joy and Gladness in our Hearts; may add new warmth to our Virtue, and vigour to our Zeal. Let us therefore, with thankful Hearts, receive these holy Mysteries, and with the wife Men of the East, let us fall down and worship the Saviour, whom they represent; and offer him the Sacrifice of our Praise and Thanksgiving; confessing it to be " meet, right and our bounden Duty, to give " thanks unto God the Father Almighty, and " to Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,

|| Eph. i. 6.

"was made very Man, of the Substance of VII.
the Virgin Mary his Mother, and that
without spot of Sin, to make us clean from
all Sin *."

These are Reslections, which at this Season especially, should fill our Souls. For unto us was born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour, &c.

* Communion Service.

VIII. Le been written by Solomon, in the latter cand of his Life, as a penirential Reflection on the Manty and Worthlefiness of the Mer fuits, which Men are here engaged in yexecept their Views be directed to a better Profleged, and led to terminate in these greats Finds of Religion, which only are worthy of a reasonable Nature, and capable of giving a reasonable Nature, and capable of giving Satisfaction.

To this purpole, he begins his book, with observing, that all things in the world see Variaty; which he exemplifies throughout, by un rinduction of several Particulars, till he comes at last to the conclusion of the whole matter; that we should learn to fear God and keep his commontments; for the will come a secure day man; because there will come a secure day man; because there will come a secure day exercise.

SERMON VIII.

Reflections on the Vanity of Worldly Pursuits.

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One generation possests away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

SERM. THIS Book is usually supposed to have VIII. been written by Solomon, in the latter end of his Life, as a penitential Reflection on the Vanity and Worthlesness of those Pursuits, which Men are here engaged in; except their Views be directed to a better Prospect, and led to terminate in those great Ends of Religion, which only are worthy of a reasonable Nature, and capable of giving Satisfaction.

To this purpose, he begins his Book, with observing, that all things in the world are Vanity; which he exemplifies throughout, by an induction of several Particulars, till he comes at last to the conclusion of the whole matter; that we should learn to fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man: because there will come a future day of reckening, when God shall bring every work

work into judgment, with every secret thing, SERM. whether it be good, or whether it be evil. VIII.

There are feveral Expressions and Remarks interspersed, which, if taken by themselves might be interpreted to a libertine Sense; and feem to countenance a licentious and voluptuous way of living: Which some have made an Objection to the authenticalness of the Book, as unworthy the Pen of an inspired Writer. But fince the Drift and Tenor of the whole is manifestly calculated to promote the Ends of Religion, and teach the Vanity of every thing below; it is most absurd, those Passages should be taken in a Sense deflructive of the general Defign; so long as they are capable of being interpreted in a manner, that is fairly agreeable and confiftent with it. They may rather be consider'd, as the Objections of diffolute and worldly Perfons, which are folv'd and answer'd by other counter-Observations: or as spoken ex bypothefi: If there were no other life after this; which yet is shewn to be an unreasonable Sup position; in consequence of which, the conclusions, which are built upon it, are unreasonable too: or laftly, as ironical Conceffions, which are only admitted for their overthrow, in order to expose the Absurdity and Folly idintal o din doi of them more effectually.

Either of these Methods of Interpretation will save the Credit of this ancient Preacher;

^{*} Ecclef. xii. 13, 14.

VIII. wrote by Inspiration: or sometimes it may be, the meaning of a Word is not rightly understood, but that which is explain'd to a libertine or irreligious Sense, may admit of such construction, as very well consists with the Doctrine and Sentiments of true Religion.

Thus, the Sentence of the Text may be thought, at the first view, to sayour of the Atheistical Notion, of the Eternity of Matter, and the enduring of this earthly Globe, without End or Diffolution; notwithstanding the continual succession and change of its Inhabitants. But when it is confider'd, that the word for ever is not always, nor indeed usually understood, of an absolute and proper Eternity; but many times intends only a long Duration, in comparison of such things, as are but fleeting and transitory: This opens us an easy Exposition of the Passage in view: how whilst the generations of men are of a thort Duration, and pass away in quick Succession to each other; the Earth the mean while endures thro' them all, and bears them one after another, engaged in the fame fearches, which their Predeceffors had made in vain.

of worldly Vanity, to shew, that a Man, who looks no farther than the things before him, has no real Profit of all the Labour that he takes under the Sun. One Age after another is projecting and pursuing perpetual Schemes

of

of Happiness below, and without bringing SERM. any thing to tolerable Effect, leaves others VIII. after them to go on in the same round; whilst the Earth itself continues in it's old Situation, and breeds up these Successions of Men to labour in the same Vanity.

This is illustrated by two or three Allusions to Nature, which shew, that all the motion and buftle of the Elements, conclude with leaving things just as they were, in respect of the general Order and Oeconomy; and go their rounds over again, without producing any new Effects. The fun also ariseth, and the fun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose *. He goes no other than his appointed Course, and after a Revolution of many Years, will have made no progress from his first Station. So also the wind goeth toward the fouth, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits +. Tho' This be inconstant in its Motions, and depends upon a Cause, that is less known or understood; yet thus far it is similar and like the rest, that it never rests in any Point, but changes often thro' them all, and never comes to any stay or constancy. Once more, all the rivers run into the fea, yet the fea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again |. The great Receptacle of Waters, which is con-

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^{*} Ecclef. i. 5. + Ver. 6. Wer. 7.

VIII. Vapours, or by subterraneous Passages, becomes, by that means, the Fountain of Springs and Rivers; which emptying again into the Sea, supply the waste that is made by that continual Draught; and without either overfilling or leaving room for a deficiency, do serve to carry on the round in a perpetual Succession. Thus every thing in Nature, tho' in constant Motion, returns but to the same Situation; and tho' all things be so full of labour, that man cannot utter it; yet the thing which bath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun*.

In proceeding farther on this Subject, it

will be proper

V A WIN

I. To offer a few known Instances of the Vanity of worldly Pursuits, with the Labour and Fatigue that does attend them, without any great Progression to be made by them, or real Emolument arising from them. And then,

II. To make fome pertinent Reflections, whereby this Confideration of the Worthlessness of secular Enjoyments, may be turned

to our fpiritual Improvement.

I. First therefore, I begin with offering a few known Instances of the Vanity of worldly Pursuits, with the Labour and Fatique that does attend them, without any great Progression to be made by them, or SERM. real Emolument arising from them. And VIII. for proof of this, I shall instance only in these three Particulars, that they are uncertain, un-

Satisfactory, untenable. And,

1. First, I say, that the Pursuits of this World are attended with great Uncertainty: so that it is very doubtful, whether we ever gain the Point we aim at: it is very usual for Men to fall short of the End or Defign they had in view, and fee that all their Labour and Fatigue has been in vain. It is Solomon's Observation in this Book of Ecclefiastes, that the race is not to the fwift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wife, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of Skill; but time and chance bappeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not bis time, as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the fnares; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time. when it falleth fuddenly upon them*. As the Birds or Fishes are caught suddenly, whilst they are sporting in the Air or Waters, or diligent in fearch of their Food; fo men are oftentimes involved in Calamity, by fudden unforeseen Accidents; whilst they were little apprehensive of the Danger, which hangs over them, and earneftly engaged in the Pursuit of Profit or of Pleasure. Or if they escape any great and remarkable Calamities; yet

^{*} Eccles: ix. 14, 12:

SERM. there are so many others engaged in the same VIII. Views with themselves, that they naturally cross and disappoint each other; and for one that succeeds in his Endeavours of this Kind, you hear of many that come off with Disappointment. Nay even he, who succeeds, is rarely without other Views and Prospects, in which he fails of Success, which embitters the Enjoyment of all his Affluence; and makes him rather disturbed and uneasy, for that which he bas not, than satisfied with what he bas.

There is little need to enlarge upon an Obfervation, which the Experience of human Life does every Day confirm and exemplify to us in great Variety. The splendid Appearances of Fortune are but as the large Prizes in a Lottery, which can fall but to a few Hands: and even they, who gain them, by gaping after more, do in great Measure lose the Rehish of their Enjoyments; that their very Success seems checquered with Loss and Disappointment. Nay even what they have gained, is perpetually liable to be loft or wrested from them; either by the Treachery or Violence of others; or elfe by the various Cafualties of Time, and what Men are apt to call Inconstancy of Fortune. In every View the Pursuit of worldly Possessions is uncertain; the Pursuers of them do frequently miscarry, and meet with Disappointment; their Success in one Affair, is damped by their miscarrying

what they have gained; which often slips out VIII. of their hands immediately, and leaves them in more anxiety, than if it had never been obtained. This cannot but be a great Abatement of the relish and satisfaction to be found in them. But abstracting from these Considerations, we have a

2. Second Argument, of the Vanity of worldly Pursuits; because, even when most

fuccessful, they are yet unfatisfactory.

Whatever opinion men have formed of the Enjoyments of Life, whilst they viewed them in other hands, and beheld the gay and glittering Appearance; yet when they come to the Possession, they never fail of finding something incompleat; some Defect or other still remains to abate their Happiness: Like some ruinous Castle, which however at a Distance it dazzles the Eyes of the Spectators, whilft it reflects the brightness of the Sun upon them; yet when they come up to it, the glittering Appearance fails: Deformity then succeeds, instead of Beauty; and they will hardly find a proper Shelter against the Viciflitudes of Wind and Weather. There are personal or domestick Inconveniences, which do oftentimes embitter the Course of the most affluent Fortune; and make the Enjoyments, which feem most desirable, to become perfectly infipid, and of no account. A crazy Body, or an anxious Mind; Children, or Servants,

SERM. vants, that are stubborn and untractable; VIII. the Aversion of those we love, or the Ingratitude of those we have befriended, shall so vitiate the Taste, and pall the Relish of all outward Acquisitions; that whatever we possess, we shall but very improperly be said to enjoy it; or perceive any solid Satisfaction or Complacency of Mind in it. Or if we have less Trial from these Missortunes; yet there are a thousand Wants in the Course of human Life, which cannot be foreseen, or

provided against, with any Certainty.

The Men, who look only on the outward Appearance, will be apt to judge those happy, whom they see possessed of the Conveniencies of Fortune, surrounded with all Wealth and Prosperity. But this must be a very imperfect Rule of Judgment, and often liable to Error and Mistake; except they could see them in their Houses and Retirements, nay and the very inmost Recesses of their Souls, to perceive, with what Relish they use these Enjoyments, and what Abatement there is made by inward Discontent and Uneafiness. They are possessed, it may be, of all outward Emoluments, which we imagine requifite to make them easy and contented: But still, if their Defires extend farther, they are no less impatient for gratifying These, than Persons in a lower Station are for theirs. Tho' Haman was the prime Favourite of the Perhan Monarch, and feemed possessed of all the Wealth Wealth and Honour, that a Subject could SERM. wish or aim at; yet so long as there appeared VIII. to be any independent of him; so long as Mordecai was suffered to sit in the King's gate, all his Acquisitions availed him nothing: When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman sull of wrath*. And the Ahab sate upon the Throne of Israel, yet all his Wealth and Authority grew tasteless and insipid; no Satisfaction could be found in his abounding Fortune, except Naboth's Vineyard might be added to his other Acquisitions; and the Rights of his Neighbour submitted to his Will and Pleasure.

It is not then, from outward Enjoyments, (even the they were capable of affording greater Satisfaction than really they are, and in less danger of being interrupted by the malice and oppositions of other Men;) It is not from the greatest run imaginable of perfonal Health and Prosperity, that we may hope for true and solid Satisfaction; except our Minds be first prepared and cultivated by a just sense of Religion, and seasoned with such Knowledge and Fear of God, as may keep the Passions in due order and decorum, and qualify us for enjoying what we have.

3. Thirdly, The last Consideration, that was mentioned, to argue the Vanity of world-ly Pursuits, was this; that the things pursued

Rfther iii. 5.

SERM. are, when attained, untenable. By which VIII. I mean, not only (what was fuggefted before) that we are liable to lose them by Misfortune, Treachery or Violence; but that the condition of our own Being is fuch, that we cannot long continue to enjoy them. This is the Purport of Solomon's Remark in the Text-one generation passetb away, and another generation cometh. It is the Condition of human Nature, to be here in a fleeting and transitory State. Man that is born of a woman bath but a short time to live, and is full of mifery. He cometh up as a flower and is cut down: he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one flay. The successive Ages of Mankind have been alike engaged, in labouring for the Honours and Possessions of this Life: And yet alike they have made haste, to leave them to others, that came after, and forfake the Enjoyments they had so greatly coveted. The Frailty of their own Nature, would not admit of any long Continuance. The Constitution of their Bodies was not formed, to endure throughout many Years; and tho' we should abstract from the many Cafualties, to which Mankind are exposed, whereby their Lives may be shortened thro' Treachery or Violence; from all Supposition of the immediate and special Hand of God, giving his Commission to the Arrows of Death, and fending out Diseases for a quicker execution; from all Accusation of their their own Error and Misconduct, which SERM' may hasten their Decay by Intemperance or VIII. Indiscretion; tho' we should suppose every Remedy to be used, which either Nature can supply, or Art can devise, for the preventing of Sickness, and prolonging of Life; yet the necessary and unavoidable Decays of Time, will wear out at last this Tabernacle of the Body, and oblige the Soul to leave it's Tenement.

This shews, how all our Schemes and Contrivances for this Life, are directed only to a fhort and transitory State; and when we succeed in them, to the utmost of our Wishes, we are yet fure not to enjoy the Satisfaction for any long Continuance; we must leave our Possessions to the growing Generation, uncertain to what Hands they shall fall, or in what Manner they shall be used and applied. Tho' the Earth itself preserves its Situation; yet the Inhabitants, one after another, make hafte to leave it; and the Toil and Fatigue, which is calculated for their future Satisfaction, does, by infenfible Degrees, impair the Fabrick of their Body; and eat out that Time, which is allowed for the Enjoyment of Life.

With what Care and Anxiety do we see Men laying themselves out, to increase their Substance and Possessions in the World? And just, it may be, as they think they have brought Matters to bear, and flatter themselves; that they have goods laid up for many Years,

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VIII. rious Enjoyment of them: it may be, I fay, just as they reach to this Point of their Wishes, the Angel of Death has his Commission, to cut them short; and they are reproached with Folly for overlooking a Matter of such daily Experience; thou fool, (says God) this night thy Soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall

We have seen this exemplified, over and over, in our own memory; and they, who succeed to the Possessions of the former generation, having no better Tenure, than those that went before them, must expect to give way to a new race of men; and leave That to others, which it is impossible to hold them-

those things be which thou hast now provided?

felves.

And so far of the FIRST thing proposed: the Instances I would offer of the Vanity of

Worldly Pursuits. I go on

II. SECONDLY, to make some pertinent reflections upon this matter; whereby this consideration, of the worthlesness of secular Enjoyments, may be turn'd to our spiritual Improvement.

Now the most material and most natural Reflections, of this kind, will be found to fall

under these four Particulars, viz.

1. That we be not too ftrongly attached

to Enjoyments of fo little Value.

2. That we learn to look out for true and more substantial Riches.

3. That

3. That the brevity of Life be well huf-SERM. banded, and improved to the best Purpo-VIII. ses. And

4. That we be careful to instruct the growing generation, to grow wise by the Example of the past; and give their minds to observe those Rules of Religion, which only

can conduct them to Felicity.

1. First then, I say, we should be careful to draw off our Affections, from matters which fo little deserve them; to disengage ourselves from all the Vanities of Life, that we may not be hamper'd by a vehement Attachment to things, which cannot last nor satisfy. To fet a high Value upon That, which has little in it worth our esteem, does but increase the disappointment; and give an edge to the misfortune, when our expectations are not fatisfied. And to promise ourselves stable Felicity in the enjoyment of That, from which we must be separated, is an Argument of great Folly and Infatuation; and little worthy of the Character of a reasonable Creature. There is no doubt, a present convenience, in the enjoyments of this kind; and therefore a proportionable effeem and endeavour is allow'd to them. Our thankfulness to God for the Bleffings of this temporal Life, should not fuffer us, either to fquander them away riotoufly; or to neglect the opportunities we have, of fecuring or increasing them. But then this should be done under fuch reserves and restrictions, L 4

SERM. strictions, as the nature of the thing suggests;
VIII. that we may use them, as things that are not to last always; and in which we ought not to acquiesce, as able to yield full and solid satisfaction. For if they be valued in this immoderate manner, our disappointment may very quickly appear; either by our loss of them, or by some other accident, to imbitter the relish and spoil, the satisfaction that is look'd for in them: but at least it must appear in the end; when we shall ourselves be taken from them, and no longer have so

much as the possession.

When struggling with the violence of a Diftemper, and lying in the Agonies of Death; what ease or mitigation shall we find, from all the Splendor of an ample Fortune, acquired by the care and fatigue of many Years? Much more, when our bodies are confuming in the Grave, reduced to the infensible State of unenliven'd Matter, the prey of Worms, and the subject of Corruption? Where will then be our relish of those Delights and Gaieties, which were used to be purfued, with fuch eagerness of Appetite? Nay, let it be added, that it is very probable, that the Soul may receive fuch Affections from this immoderate Attachment, as will continue greatly to molest and discompose it, in another State, wherein it will be imposfible to gratify them. For how should we imagine, that all those Appetites and Desires will

will be immediately laid aside, as soon as SERM-those corporal Organs are demolished, through VIII. which they were excited? So that by too eager a pursuit of these Enjoyments; we shall not only consume ourselves in vain, for that which neither can satisfy, nor be retained; but we shall be farther instrumental, to perpetuate in ourselves a principle of Misery, and six a vehement inclination to That, from which we must be separated. Again,

2. Secondly, having learnt to disengage ourselves from the Vanities of Life, we should be taught moreover, to look out for true and more substantial Riches. For though these things can no longer be enjoy'd, after the prefent Life; yet the Soul being made for immortality, will be capable of some Enjoyments in its separate State: and being reserv'd for a future Union with the body, in an incorruptible and immortal Condition; fomething there must be, which is capable of yielding real fatisfaction, throughout all Eternity. Now fuch is the Reward, which the Christian Religion proposes and commends to us; the Enjoyment of that Satisfaction and Delight, which flows from the inexhaustible fulness of the Divine Presence; and the conforming of ourselves to the Divine Image and Likeness, in such measure and proportion, as the condition of our nature admits.

The supreme Author of our Being, and of all Things that exist, being most excellent in SERM. his own Nature, cannot but be an unmeafurable Source of Blifs and Happiness. he has all Things in his Power, and disposes of Nature according to his own Will; he is able to defend us from all Evil, and supply us with all that is good and beneficial. As he is eternal, and unchangeable in his own Nature, he is fuch a Protector, as can never fail us; but will continue, throughout endless Ages, a perpetual and unexhaufted Principle of Happiness and Glory. The enjoyments, which are fought in him, and fought by his Direction and Encouragement, must needs be both fatiffactory and durable; commensurate to our Defires, and commensurate to our Being. Therefore they are represented, in Scripture, to be fuch Poffessions, as cannot be worn out by the injuries of Time, nor loft by Misfortune, nor torn away by Violence; to be Treasures laid up in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break thro' and steal .- an inberitance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. For such inestimable Treafures, it will be wifely done, to employ all our Diligence; and with the Merchant in the Gospel, to part with every thing else, rather than miss the Opportunity, of securing this

one Pearl of great Price.

An intelligent Being, that must subsist for ever, will make but an ill bargain; if to gain the gratification of a few moments, it shall barter away its Prospect of everlasting Felici-

ty; and give up the Soul itself, in exchange for SERM. those corporal Delights, which the generations, that are past, have already left behind them; and we ere long must leave, to those that shall come after us.

3. Thirdly, these same Considerations, of the fhort time of our continuance here, and the Eternity of that Condition, which we are to provide for; should instruct us, to use great Care and Circumfpection, that our time be well husbanded, and improved to the best Purposes. We see how one Generation has gone after another; how the Hours and the Years slide swiftly by us, which should induce us, to bestir ourselves in time; that whilst our business appears to be so great and so important, and so little time is allow'd us for dispatching it; we may be careful to lay hold on the present Opportunity, and work, while it is call'd to day; as confidering, that the night cometh, when no Man can work. If any confiderable advantage were proposed, to last for term of Life, and we had but a few Hours allow'd us to look after and secure it; much more, if by neglecting That Opportunity, we had no other Prospect, but to pass our whole Lives in Diffress and Misery; should we not think it a matter of the last Importance, not to let those critical Minutes slip by us unobserved, nor spend that time in supine Indolence and Folly, upon which the Happiness and quiet of all the rest of our Life is **supposed**

VIII. portion, between making provision for this Life, and for Eternity? The one is providing, perhaps, for a few Days, at most but for a few Years: whereas the other is providing for that future State, which shall never have an End.

The longest Life may seem but short, to secure such important Interest: but when the uncertainty of Life is taken into the account, which may be cut off every moment; this should instruct us, to improve our time with the greatest Care and Circumspection; that as fast as it slies from us, it may not be lost and useless to our main Purpose; but every Year, and every Day of our Lives may be so employ'd in the sear of God, and in the obedience of Faith, that it may continually set us forward in the way to Happiness, and promote our well-being to all Eternity.

When we thus consider, how the time is short, and the Fashion of this World passeth away, with a swiftness, that cannot possibly be staid; and how it is succeeded by an endless state of Happiness or Misery: This should, in all reason, excite us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; and to work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling. Tho' the present satisfactions of Sin were supposed to be much more solid and substantial than they are; yet who shall pretend to place them in the balance with matters of an infinite duration? And why then

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are we so stupid, as to mispend the little time SERM. we have, in the enjoyment and pursuit of VIII. These; whilst we neglect to secure ourselves those true Riches, which would never fail us; and lose the Opportunity, which perhaps may not be continued any longer to us? Our life itself is but a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Mean while, the business we have to dispatch in it, is of the last Importance and Moment to us; not only for the securing of farther and more folid Advantages; but indeed for the avoiding of extremest Anguish and Uneafiness. And what madness is it then, to trifle away those precious Minutes, which might be so eafily improved to our eternal Welfare, and abuse them rather to hasten and increase our Damnation? Once more, and contract to

4. Fourthly, let this continual experience, of the Vanity of earthly Goods, and the repeated disappointment of one Age after another; let it lead us, to admonish and instruct the growing generation, that they may learn Wisdom from the failure of the past, and give their minds to observe those Rules of Religion, which only can conduct them to Felicity.

What can be more natural than for those, who have been long convinc'd of the little satisfaction to be found in any thing below, the little certainty of success in our Pursuits, and the undoubted certainty of a speedy Separation:

I say, what can be more natural, than for such persons

VIII. into Life, that they beware of forming such expectations from these things, as they can no way answer; and of setting their Affections on them in such manner, as must increase

the infelicity of Disappointment?

Next to this, it will be fit to raise their minds from Earth to Heaven, and instruct them, that there are Treasures to be sought for, in another Life, which are qualified to fill every desire of a spiritualized and reasonable Being: not tied to Enjoyments, which can neither last nor satisfy, but hid with Christ in God; a Being of infinite unchangeable Perfection: So that they must needs be most excellent in their kind, and endless in duration.

And fince it has been confirm'd by long experience, that we have here no continuing city, but one generation makes hast after another; and as our Years go round, we advance apace towards the time of Diffolution; This furnishes a seasonable matter of Advice for those, who have their Life before them, not to trifle away the time, as many others have done; but to improve the precious minutes to the best Advantage, and make their swift Passage through a vain and troublesome World, instrumental to secure them a glorious and happy Immortality. Thus, the Example of former Ages, would be matter of Instruction for those, that are to come; and the generations that are past, would continue

to speak to their Posterity, when all things SERM. are discreetly confider'd and applied by fage VIII.

Counsel, and mature Judgment.

How does this Reflection lead us, to lament the Infelicity of the present Age, in which the Liberties indulg'd to Youth, and the neglect of proper Care and Instruction, do prefage a greater degeneracy of Mankind, and endanger the future generations being worse than the foregoing, by whom they ought to have improved! The grievous neglect of Religion in private Families, the gross ignorance of Scripture, and of the great Heads of Christian Doctrine, do fadly prognosticate our going backwards, and that the latter end thould be worse with us than the beginning.

However, as I trust there is a time to come, when there will be a Revival, and a great Increase of our Religion; when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the fea; it concerns us to take care, that those under our impection be furnish'd with such proper Notices of Faith and Duty, that they may affift in restoring the decay'd Interest of Religion and Virtue; and from being helpful to turn many to righteoufnels, may come to seap the bleffed Fruit of those Endeavours, to fine as the brightnesses the firmament, and as the flars for ever and

Now to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghoft, be all honour and glory, &cc.

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SERMONIX.

FASTING an act of Repentance, and the Way to Pardon.

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Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness:

when the rewinder decrease, and a treat HE Prophet being, in this Chapter, SERM. IX. commission'd to arraign the prevailing Wickedness and Vices of the Age; to reprove and rebuke with all Authority; (cry aloud, Spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the bouse of Jacob their sins) has it notwithstand-ing laid before him, that this their Wickedness was conceal'd under a specious veil of Hypocrify, and pretended Holines: yet they feek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteoufness, and for sook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching to God.

They are not blamed (you may observe) for SERM. being constant and affiduous in these outward IX. acts of Worship. But there could be no excuse for imagining, that such outward Formalities should be accepted by the Searcher of hearts; whilst their affections remain'd unmortified as ever; whilft their minds were influenced by fuch Pride, or Covetousness, or carnal Lusts, as would often carry them to great Extravagance, and demonstrate their Worship to be nothing else but empty Ceremony, and a meer honouring of him with their lips, whilft their hearts were far from him. It was therefore without reason, that they expected the acceptance of their folemn Fasts. and complain to find them difregarded; Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou feeft not? Wherefore have we afflicted our fout, and thou takest no knowledge? For so says God in return, Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours; Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fift of wickedness. I shall confider this Paffage under THREE Views, Tole nous insured been recom namely,

I. As it is an intimation of some receiv'd Principles among the Jews, which not only gave the handle for this expostulation of the Hypocrites before us; but are tacitly allow'd in that Answer, God is pleased to make them.

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II. As

162 FASTING an act of Repentance,

SERM. II. As it discovers the infolent temper of IX. these Hypocrites, in thus presuming to expositulate their Services with God, and object their own Deserts, as not sufficiently considered or regarded by him. Wherefore have swe fasted, say they, and thou sees not a whom have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? And

defects of their pretended Humiliation, and fo implies withal a pertinent Direction, how to order our religious Fasts in such manner, as God chooses and accepts. And

I. First then, this Passage deserves to be consider'd, as a clear intimation of some received Principles among the Jews, which not only gave the handle for this Expostulation of the Hypocrites before us; but are tacitly allow'd in that answer, God is pleased to make them. And these, at least, must be the two following.

1. That Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin. And like-

wife,

2. That it is a likely means, to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon, and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

Both these must be supposed Principles in the present Expostulation, because the complaint of being disregarded, is founded entire-

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ly in the exercise of such severities, as were SERM. thought to have deserv'd greater respect. And IX. they are both likewife allow'd in the Divine Answer; which neither charges religious Fasting with any impropriety, nor represents the supreme Judge of our actions, as unwilling to accept it: but only upbraids the particular Fasting of these Hypocrites with such fignal defects, as shew'd it to be not really religious.

1. First then, it is implied on both hands, as a confess'd Principle among the Yews, that Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humi-

liation for Sin.

This they might learn from that Prescription, which they found of it in their Law it felf, on the great day of expiation, or atonement, which was not only declared to be a Sabbath of rest, in which they might do no work at all, but in which they were required to afflict their fouls from evening to evening: and whofoever should prove faulty in this matter, was threatened with an utter excision +.

The defign of this Solemnity was to make a general atonement for the Sins of the people *, and as Sorrow and Confession were neceffary to attend the Sacrifices upon that occasion; so the affliction imposed upon them, must be understood of such outward Severi-

⁺ Lev. xvi. 29, 31, and Chap. xxiii. 29, 32. Lev. xvi. 21, 34 M 2

SERM. ties, as were then usual with Mourners, and were properly expressive of their inward Grief. Such were their neglect of decency in Dress; their hanging down their Heads in great confusion of Face; their lying on the ground, or walking with unufual flowness; their tearing their Hair, or their Apparel; their putting on Sackcloth; and spreading Ashes under them: of which, and the like marks of Sorrow, we have inflances in Scripture too many to admit, and too obvious to need, enumeration. And tho' the Prophet Joel, at first view, may be thought to disapprove them, when he advised to rent their beart and not their garments; yet it is certain he meant not to exclude the latter any otherwise, than as that might happen to thrust out and exclude the former, which was first to be regarded. And therefore, but in the verse immediately before, he joins them both together, and advises them to turn to God, not only with all their heart, but (which would be the genuine refult of that) with these outwards Signs or Tokens of it, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning *. a general abatement in

It is natural, indeed, for them, who are really affected with any high degree of forrow, to shew some sign of it, in the neglect of themselves: it is scarce possible to conceal it in the course of their behaviour. We daily

* Joel ii. 12, 13.

court

fee how the death of a friend, or some con-Serm. siderable loss in their estate, will sometimes IX. take men off from their regard to every thing else; and for a time overwhelm or swallow them up with gries. And should they then be less affected by the injury their Soul sustains? Should not their remorse for Sin, as much engage their Thoughts? Should it not humble and lay them low in their own Reslections; and fill them with such a sense of their Unworthiness, as will exert itself in proper acts of self-denial, in the Punishment of themselves by a voluntary suspension of those Enjoyments, which they are conscious they so little deserve.

The different tempers and constitutions of Men, might occasion some variety in their choice of these outward methods of Affliction. Some, for instance, might wear Sackcloth, and others might tear their usual Apparel; one might fit down to lament himfelf in Ashes, whilst another might walk heavily, and carry forrow in his mien. This man might wash his couch with tears, and bemoan himself in silence; whilst That man was apt to be louder in his mourning, and utter it in doleful Lamentations. But however they might differ in these lesser Circumstances; yet, Fasting was an expression in which all agreed; infomuch that it is laid down for a rule among the Jews, that M 3

SERM. wherefoever the Scripture speaks of afflicting

IX. the Soul, this Duty is intended *.

By a man's Soul, it is observable, the Scripture means himself; and therefore, by his afflicting his Soul, it must mean proportionably his afflicting himself, or sustaining some voluntary Punishment in his own person.

Now, as there is nothing to necessary to the prefervation of Life as Food; fo the suspenfion of that, for any confiderable time, must be the most fignal of those personal Afflictions. So our Translators represent the Pfalmift as chaftening his Soul with Fasting +; and Daniel, in his Abstinence, is represented by the Angel to have chasten'd himself before his God ||: As it was likewise professedly the end of that Fast, which was proclaim'd by Ezra, that the people might afflict themselves before their God 1. Hunger and Thirst, the immediate effects of Fasting, we cannot want to be inform'd, must be irksome and uneasy. From hence, they serve fitly to remind us, of that finfulness and pollution of our Nature, from which all our Pain and Mifery proceeds, and quicken our Remorfe by that fad Confideration. They likewife punish our abuse of past Enjoyments, by making us perceive the want of present. They wean our Affections, by degrees, from fublunary Goods; and by refifting the Violence of depraved Appetites and Paffions, we at last bring the body in subjection to the mind,

^{*} See Bp. Patrick of Fasting, Chap. 12. + Psal. lxix. 10. Dan. x. 12. ‡ Ezra viii. 21.

and prevent that Disturbance, which unruly SERM' Lusts might give us, in the acts of Prayer and IX. ferious Meditation. Lastly, this sense of Necessity in ourselves, will better incline our Sympathy with others, as the paring off from our own common expences, will better enable us to affift them.

It appears from the Examples already mention'd of David, of Daniel and of Ezra, that tho' there was no more than one general Fast appointed by the Law; yet from thence, as well as from the Reason of the thing, the Fews took occasion to observe others as well of a private as a publick nature. Those of David and Daniel, were their own private acts of Humiliation before God: But that of Ezra was observ'd by the whole body of the people; as also that mention'd in the Book of Estber. when not only the Queen and her Maidens, but all the fews, that were in Shufban, fafted for three days successively, neither eating nor drinking night or day +.

Nav. we learn from the Prophet Zechary | as well as from the modern Fewish Kalendar, that there were four annual Feasts appointed in the time of the Captivity at Babylon: one in the tenth month for Nebuchadnezzar's laying fiege to Jerusalem; another in the fourth month for the destruction of the City; another in the fifth for the demolition of the Temple; and a fourth in the seventh month, for the murther of Gedaliab.

+ Esth. iv. 16. | Zech. vii. 5. Chap. viii. 19. M 4

So likewise to that day of Atonement, SERM. which was prescribed, by Moses, they have prefixed, by universal custom, certain days of Preparation: that by habituating themselves to Fasting and Prayer, to Almsgiving and other acts of Penance, they might the better be qualified for the Duties of that great day; and humbled in fincerity, as well as outward fhew. To this purpose they set apart at least the Week before; and some among them are faid to observe no less than forty days: and if the rest do not continue their penitential Devotions thro' that whole space of time; yet the first of the forty is at this day universally observ'd; in memory of those forty days, which Moses spent in Fasting and Prayers for the people, at the second time of his ascent into the Mount *...

Nor have we an account only of these yearly, but of certain weekly Fasts, which were observed among them. I fast twice in the week, said the vain glorious Pharisee +. Nor was this any thing more, than what was usual among those of a stricter Conversation; The second and sisted days of every week (which answer to our Monday and Thursday) being set apart for that purpose; as also for the more solemn assembling of themselves together: that so, there might no three days

^{*} See Bp. Hooper's Discourse concerning Lent, p. 419, 420. + Luke xviii. 12.

pass successively without their hearing of the SERM. Law in publick *. My very bediene state IX.

Nay, and so proper a concomitant, was this Fasting judg'd, of their more solemn Devotions, that even on the Sabbath itself (as great a Festival as it was) they are said not to have eaten or drank any thing, before the morning Service was concluded ‡. From all which we may understand, what is taught us in the Gospel, concerning the frequent Fastings of the Disciples of St. John, and of the Pharises †.

And now, after this account, which has been given of their folemn days of Fasting and Humiliation; (as well as of the private practice of the men of more exalted Piety) it may be proper very briefly to explain, with what degrees of Abstinence they held it necessary to observe them. And here it is remarkable, that in the strictest sense, Fasting is opposed, in Scripture, to eating and drinking of any kind whatever ||. And therefore a proper and compleat Fast, must imply a total Abstinence for the whole four and twenty hours: as on the day of Expiation we have seen they were required to afflict themselves from even unto even.

And thus the Fast of Esther abovemention'd, continued for three days successively:

^{*} See Bp. Patrick of Fasting, Chap. 13. ‡ Ibid. Chap. 12. † Mat. ix. 14. Mar. ii. 18. Luk, v. 33. | See Bp. Patrick, Chap. 10, and Bp. Hooper, p. 20, &c.

Pro Fasting an act of Repentance,

Swam tho' in their ordinary Fasts they allow'd of IX. some Refreshment in the first evening; to qualify them the better to endure 'till the next. But when the time prescribed for Fasting was too long, to admit such total Abstinence; it was then enough, that they abstain'd from suller Meals, and more delicate Provisions; that they confined themselves to a spare Diet, and a coarser kind of Food; and it may be, took That only in the evening, that their longest Fasts might be as strict as possible.

So it seems Josephus understood that Fast of Esther; and so Daniel has clearly explain'd his own: In those days, says he, Iwas mourning three full weeks, I are no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were suffilled. From which Example we may judge of the Nature of those forty days Abstinence, which those of the severer Discipline observed, as preparatory to the day of Expiation.

Nor was length of time the only exception in this matter. They who by a constant Absterniousness were mortified already, and had brought their body to a good degree of subjection, would have less occasion for those rigorous Prescriptions, to prepare them for the Duty of such Solemnities. And they, whose weakly Constitution, and low habit of body, required more regular supplies of Food, were,

* Dan. x. 2,*3.

no doubt, to be excused a total Abstinence; SERM. provided they took care to be very sparing and temperate, and abstain from such things, as might minister to Luxury, either to pamper the body, or indulge the tafte. We know who has told us, that he will have mercy and not facrifice: and fince the Duty we are now confidering is chiefly intended to be inftrumental to some higher end; since it is the principal defign of Fasting, to fit men for the Exercise of holy Duties; it seems from hence to be a necessary consequence, that whenever Fasting is so far from having this effect, that it rather makes men grow fick and languish, and so really disqualifies them for the Duties proposed, their Obligation to it must cease in proportion, as its usefulness is lessen'd; and they ought not to use That under the notion of a furtherance, which is truly an impediment. But from the lower degrees of Abstinence, scarce any pretence of Constitution could excuse them: nor could they, by any means, be reckon'd to answer the religious purposes of Fasting; unless they laid such a check and restraint upon their Appetite, as might in some measure affict them, and bring their body into some tolerable degree of subjection to the mind.

And thus far of the first of those Points, which is implied in the Text, as a receiv'd Principle among the Jews; namely, that Fasting, with the other Austerities attending

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SERM. it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humi-IX. liation for Sin. It is farther supposed,

2. Secondly, That the same is a likely means to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon; and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

Thus much indeed must follow, from what was faid before, of the end or purpose of religious Fasting. For if it expresses so high a detestation of Sin, in a voluntary Punishment and Revenge upon ourselves; if it demonstrates a thorough conviction of our own unworthiness, to enjoy the good Creatures of that glorious Majesty, we so ungratefully offend; if it fets forth our charitable concern and grief of mind, for the Offences of others, who mourn not for themselves; if moreover, it helps to mortify our corrupt Affections, and brings us to fuch a meek and humble frame of Spirit, as may become the state of Supplicants; there is great ground to hope, that fuch pious dispositions will be graciously accepted by our most merciful Creator; and that the outward acts, which both fpring from, and promote them, will therefore be accepted upon their account.

This, we find, has been the general opinion of all Nations; and therefore the Heathen Ninevites themselves thought there could be no likelier way to appeare the wrath of God, and avert his impending Judgments, than the solemn observation of a general Fast, and Humiliation

Humiliation of themselves in Sackcloth and SERM. Ashes. The Professors of the true Religion have gone upon yet better grounds; as having a more fure word of prophecy to certify them, that the facrifices of God are a broken fpirit: and whatever may become of the wilful and impenitent; yet a broken and a contrite heart he will be fure not to despise: that therefore, if our Fast be made a day of real and fincere Humiliation; there can be no doubt of its being, what the Prophet most emphatically stiles it, an acceptable day to the Lord. His appointment of one folemn yearly Fast among the Yews, and annexing a promise of Pardon and Forgiveness to it, was a sufficient declaration, how he approved the method, and encouraged the People to observe others, after the Example of This. The dry and and a some

Moreover it appears from many instances, how the Penitents in fact have been accepted, their Prayers regarded, and their Sins forgiven them upon such Humiliation; and if for secret ends of Providence, it be not always expedient to avert those temporal Judgments, which such Sins may have occasion'd; yet this must be acknowledg'd the most probable method, we can take for that purpose: and therefore, it is one motive, which the Prophet Joel urges to Fasting and Weeping and sincere Contrition; Who knoweth if he will turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering, unto the Lord

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SERM, Lord your God *? The Ninevites already mention'd are a memorable instance of this kind; who, tho' threatned with an utter de-Aruction, within forty days, yet obtain'd the Favour to have this Sentence reversed. and their Judgment respited for many years, upon their general Repentance, and Humiliation of themselves before God. Nay, fometimes this effect has follow'd from deep Sorrow and Remorfe; even where it had not influence enough to produce a real Reformation and Amendment of Life. For fo we read of Abab himself, when be rent his clothes and put fackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in fackcloth, and went foftly; we read that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, faying, Seeft thou how Abab bumbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days +.

We have hitherto seen the opinion, and practice of the Jews; and far be it from us to suppose them overthrown, by any rule of Christianity. The Disciples, it is true, of Jesus, were censured by those of John; for not addicting themselves to the same frequent Fastings, which were usual with the men of stricter discipline. But in what manner did their Master vindicate their conduct? Not by insisting, that this piece of Jewish Discipline was to be utterly abolished; but that that

[•] Joel ii. 14. † 1 Kings xxi. 27, &c. † Mat. ix. 14, 15.

was not the proper season for such severities; SERM. that the time of his presence was a time of IX, Joy and Exultation, in which the frequent exercise of Fasting would be equally abourd, as at a nuptial Entertainment: but that after his departure should succeed a time of Mourning and Humiliation, in which it would be their Duty to revive the antient Discipline, and afflict themselves as formerly, with frequent acts of self-denial, Can the children of the Bride-chamber mourn, says he, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast *.

Accordingly in his Sermon on the Mount, our Lord has given Rules for Fasting, to avoid the vain-glorious Shew and Oftentation of the Hypocrites; and in humble Sincerity to lay open our Grief before our Father, who feeth in fecret, and will reward us openly. St. Paul, in Ohedience to this great Direction, acquaints us, bow he was in fastings often +; for this very End, that he might keep under his body, and bring it into subjection t. And St. James lays it down as a general Rule for Christian Practice, to be afflisted (which from the ftyle of the old Teftament appears to intend fasting) and to mourn and sweep, to turn our laughter to mourning, and our jey to beariness to bumble our selves in the fight of the Lord, that he may lift us up ||.

^{*} Mat. ix. 15. † 2 Cor. xi. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27. The

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The Christian Church did, in its primitive SERM. State, conform itself to such Precepts and Examples. The weekly Fasts of Wednesday and Friday were substituted in the Room of the Mondays and Thursdays of the Jews *: and the last was plainly intended, in Commemoration of our Saviour's Passion, to which, for the like reason, some Churches added the Day following; in which he continued in a State of Death, and applied to that purpose those words of our Saviour, that his Disciples should fast in those days, when the Bridegroom should be separated from them. The days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast.

But tho' these were not neglected by the Men of stricter Piety and Devotion; yet much more folemn was the yearly Commemoration of our Saviour's Crucifixion; That true Christian Atonement for the Sins of the whole World, which fucceeded to the typical Expiation of the Yews; and like that, was thought necessary to be introduced by fuch a preparatory Season of Penance and Devotion, as whilst it purified its diligent Observers from the Power and Pollution of their Sins, might make them fit Subjects of that holy Joy, with which it would become them to celebrate the approaching Festival of Easter +.

^{*} Bp. Patrick. chap. 13. Bp. Hooper. p. 46, &c, + Ibid. p. 418, &c. The

The number of days appointed for this pur-Serm. pose was extremely various: and whilst some IX! began their Devotions in the Holy Week, there were others spent no less than forty days in preparation; from whence the sea-son of Lent took its Name of Quadragesima*.

Our Church in this has transcribed after the primitive Pattern; and besides the Vigils or Evens before certain Festivals, has appointed the forty days of Lent, and all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas day, besides the additional Solemnities of the Rogation and Ember Seasons, to be observed as days of Fasting or Abstinence. In this indeed appears her Wisdom and her Moderation; that she has no where prescribed any certain Rules of Abstinence: but left That as a matter of Discretion; out of a just regard to our various Constitutions, and the exigence of our Affairs respectively. She only expects, that we should take such occasions to afflict and humble our felves before God; as well by the sparingness and coarseness of our Diet, as by imparting to the Necessities of other people, what we fave from our felves; in order to subdue our carnal and worldly Affections, and prepare us with more fervent Devotion, to bewait our own Sins, and those of other people; to supplicate the Favour of God, and to avert his Judgments; and to procure his gracious aid for the discharge

ont not shard ou Patrick. Chap. 16.00.000

SERM. of better Obedience in the time to come. IX. She judges it expedient to have stated days appointed for that purpose; because the generality of men would be apt to neglect these neceffary Duties, if not invited and reminded of them, by the regular return of fuch Solemnities. But the does not fo rigorously prescribe the Method of observing them; but that they, who are unable to fast all day from Food, may be excused, for their Abstinence from fuller Meals, as well as from the more luscious and pampering Provisions: provided they improve this Affliction of their Bodies, to the real Benefit

and Advantage of their Souls.

But in what manner, shall I venture to purfue fo unpopular an Argument? Shall I press upon you, the observation of these Fasts, which are grown almost obsolete thro' a general neglect? Or shall I say, that these Prescriptions of the Church are in themselves unnecessary, and therefore need not be regarded? Alas! I can have little hope, that any thing, which I should offer, might help to the reviving of fo pious and primitive a Practice: But yet, this is undoubtedly required by the standing Rules of our Church; and let it be as much out of Fashion as it will, the Obligation, which we stand in to them, cannot but be matter of Weight and Importance.

'Tis true, as the fixing of the Time is a matter of meer Discipline and outward Form; great allowances there may be made for the

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necessities of Business, and other occasional SERM. Indispositions. But be sure, it is a fault to IX. let Business or Pleasure swallow up all our time, without allotting any portion of it to fuch religious Humiliations. If we have not leifure to observe the constant return of these Solemnities; yet at least let some of them be fet apart, to enquire into the state of our Souls, in order to bewail and correct all Imperfections, and preserve that Relish of Religion, which may qualify and prepare us for eternal Let the approaching Season of Lent more particularly be improved, to fuch good and beneficial Purposes; and let the inward Grief and Humiliation of our Souls express it felf in Fasting, and such bodily exercises, as will be of some Profit to us; altho' it be but little, in comparison of that real Sorrow and Remorfe, which it is meant to express.

Place not then your Fasting, in meer abstinence from Flesh; whilst you pamper your Body, or indulge your Taste with variety of other Dainties. But let the fasting of your Body be fitly suited to the affliction of your Soul; let it be an act of real Mortification and Self-denial; let it be such as may prepare you for the Devotions of the Season, and enable you the better to bestow such Alms, as are

proper to be joined with them.

If your affairs will not allow you to be so exact in observing the whole time of Lent, let it be your care, at least, to have certain N 2 Por-

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SERM. Portions of it fet apart for the exercise of these Duties. Let the day of our Saviour's Paffion be observed with all the strictness, that our Constitutions may bear; and not spent (as I fear it is too commonly) in eating and drinking, and other acts of common Business; a thing (says the late excellent Bishop Patrick) never heard of in the Church of Christ till these latter days*; and which therefore, among other Scandals, affords us matter of the justest lamentation. whole Week in which it falls, be regarded as a time of uncommon and strict Humiliation.

Let the Wednesdays and Fridays through the whole Season, as being the more solemn days of Prayer, be observed with such Retirement and Abstinence as may affist our Devotion. And if our affairs allow it, let the other days of Lent (excepting the Sundays, which are always festival) be generally improved by fuch mortifying Exercises; or at the very least by abstaining from the more airy and jovial Diversions.

What use this Practice might be of to men of the more gross and more aggravated wickedness, what need they have to lament their Impiety with floods of Tears, to break off their evil Habits by more frequent and rigorous Severities, and to punish themselves with a stricter denial of the Benefits they have

* Ut fupra Chap. 18.

abused, is obvious at the first mention; and SERM. will, no doubt, be fully justified, whenever they shall in earnest venture upon making the Experiment. And if they, who have been used to walk in the ways of Virtue and Religion; have reason to rejoice in the Lord alway; upon the sense they have of their peace with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ; yet it lies upon Them to bewail the publick Sins and Offences of the people; for fo the Apostle instructed his Corinthians, that they ought to have mourned over the incestuous Person*; and expected for his own part, to be humbled among them, in order to bewail many, which had finned and had not repented +. And fuch, no doubt, was the design of publick Penance, usual at this Season; that the Sinner might receive the benefit of the publick Fastings and Prayers of And if thro' the iniquity of the the Church. times, this piece of ancient Discipline is now become impracticable; yet let us not be wanting to supply, as we are able, the defect, by heartily lamenting that Infidelity and Atheism, that Vice and Immorality, that Herefie and Division, that Strife and Envying, which is gone out among us, and calls for the heaviest of the Divine Judgments; even for the removal of our Candlestick, and the extinction of that Light, which is fo wretchedly abused.

* 1 Cor. v. 2. + 2 Cor. xii. 21.

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Nav. and let me add, that all have Cor-SERM. ruptions of their own, which call for no small IX. degree of Humiliation and Concern; which the better men they are, the more they will perceive, the more they will afflict themselves at the Conviction of it: the more earnestly will they labour to suppress and conquer them; and pray to that Jejus, " who for our fakes " did fast forty days and forty nights," that he would give them "grace to use such ab-" stinence, that the slesh being subdued to " the spirit, they may ever obey his godly " motions in righteoufness and true holiness, to his honour and glory, who liveth and " reigneth with the Father and the Holy "Ghoft, one God, world without end, " Amen *.

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^{*} Collect for the 1 Sunday in Lent.

SERMON X.

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Hypocritical Fasting exposed, and religious recommended.

ISAIAH lviii. 3, 4.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to fmite with the fift of wickedness.

THIS remarkable Passage I proposed to SERM. consider under THREE views, namely, X.

I. As it is an intimation of some received Principles among the Jews, which not only gave the handle for this Expostulation of the Hypocrites before us, but are tacitly allowed in that answer God is pleased to make them.

II. As it discovers the insolent temper of these Hypocrites, in thus presuming to expostulate their services with God, and object their own deserts, as not sufficiently considered or regarded by him. And

III. As

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X. defects of their pretended Humiliation, and so implies withal, a pertinent direction how to order our religious Fasts, in such manner as God chooses and accepts.

I. And FIRST, as it is an intimation of fome received Principles among the Jews; I took notice that there are manifestly two obfervable from this Passage, namely,

1. That Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin. And likewise,

2. That it is a likely means to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon, and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

To this perpose I briefly laid before you the Jewish Practice of Fasting, and other acts of Humiliation, prescribed only in one instance in the Law of Moses; but from thence drawn out into many others, both publick and private, annual and weekly. The Nature of the thing, its Institution in the Law, and the numerous Examples of the actual Efficacy and Success of it, are all undoubted Testimonies of its acceptableness with God; as the Practice of the Jews was, of their firm expectation that it should be so accepted.

Nor is it to be looked on as a piece of fewish Superstition, abolished with the Rites and Ceremonies of the old Law, and repugnant therefore to the glorious Liberty and Free-

dom

dom of the Gospel. For as it is a Practice Serm. founded in the Reason of things, and flowing X. indeed from Principles of Nature; so we find it recommended among the Precepts of our great Master; continued afterwards by his Apostles; and by the whole Church of Christ after their Example: from whence we come to have days appointed for that purpose in the Church of England; more particularly the solemn Season of Lent: which succeeds the yearly Fast of Expiation among the Jews; and the foregoing days, which were prepara-

tory to it.

And however the observation of this Seafon may now be grown unfashionable, (when from unreasonable fears of Popery, we are apt to run into the contrary extreams) yet fome Portions of it ought certainly to be fet apart, for the stricter enquiry into the state of our Souls; the deeper Humiliation of ourselves before God; the breaking off our evil Habits; and rifing to fuch newness of Life, as may fitly qualify us to celebrate the succeeding Festival of our Saviour's Resurrection. Nor should this Grief be kept entirely within; but express itself, if not in compleat Fasting from all Food for some considerable time; yet at least in such Abstinence from the more plentiful and delicate Provisions, as may fignify the fense we have of our unworthiness, of the Mercies we enjoy, and so help us to subdue all carnal and worldly Affections; that

SERM. we may be qualified, with higher degrees of X. Sincerity and Zeal, to join in the Devotions of this holy Season.

Such was the Subject of my last Discourse; wherein I dispatched the FIRST view of the Text. I proceed now, in order to consi-

der it.

II. SECONDLY, as it discovers the insolent temper of these Hypocrites, in thus presuming to expostulate their Services with God, and object their own Deserts as not sufficiently consider'd or regarded by him. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? In this Expostulation we may fairly take notice of their Presumpti-

on, Impatience, and Infidelity.

1. First, their Presumption is observable in this Expostulation, in arrogating such pretence of merit to themselves; as if their services had right to demand returns of the Divine Favour, and lay claim to a reward as tho' it were a matter of debt. Had their Repentance been ever fo fincere and fruitful of good Works, it had ill become them to infift upon its worthiness, or plead their title from it to the Rewards of Providence. For what had they done in this, more than was their Duty, and by various ties and obligations bound upon them? Could they reckon themselves any way profitable unto God, as he that is wife may be profitable unto bimself? Could

Could they think their obedience any additi-SERM. on to his Happiness, or expect he should find any Advantage in it; altho' they had been able to have reach'd the utmost Perfection? They should rather have remember'd, that whilft they lay low on the earth, precarious in their Being, fallible in the contrivance of their Projects, and impotent in the execution; the God, with whom they used such freedom, fat high upon his Throne in Heaven, exalted far above all blessing and praise, thro' his Omniscience beholding, by his 'Omnipotence disposing of all things in the Universe; neither wanting the affistance of his frail creatures, nor liable to any injuries by their transgression. In all this there can be no foundation for a claim of Merit in the most perfect Services; and if God has been pleafed to annex most gracious Promises of Reward to our Obedience; yet That is an act of his own Bounty and Goodness; and it must be an argument of great Presumption and Ingratitude to speak of the effect of his free Mercy as a right of our own. It is indeed an argument of fuch Prefumption, as is utterly inconfistent with true Penitence and Contrition of Soul.

For suppose a man truly humbled under the sense of his Sins, and with great confusion of face lamenting his unworthiness; and can it be imagin'd fuch a one as this should ever think of Merit in his Services, or lay claim Χ.

SERM. claim to greater Bleffings, as a matter of Right: whilft he acknowledges himself unworthy of the leaft? He knows the imperfection of his best Performances; and that whatever there may be in them, which is good and commendable, proceeds not from himself; but from the gracious Affistance of his heavenly Father, who worketh in him both to will and to do. And tho' he may humbly hope for the acceptance of fuch Humiliation; because He has promised to accept it, who cannot deceive him; yet will he only expect and receive it as a Favour, and not claim it as a Debt; he will only expect it with the utmost Resignation, as conscious to himself of numberless Defects; that he has been punish'd less than his Iniquities deserve, and able therefore to vindicate the Justice of his Maker, in all that shall be brought upon him. Finally, he knows that temporal Advertity is oftentimes subservient to many wise Ends and purposes of Providence: and therefore he reckons it no certain proof, that his Humiliation is rejected; if the rod of outward Affliction should never be removed: from whence he has hope, even in death itself; and resolves with holy Job, that the' God should May bim, yet would be trust in bim.

How different from this, was the behaviour of the Hypocrites before us! How little Sincerity could there be in their Humiliation, which left them possess'd of so much Pride

claim

and Prefumption, so high an opinion and va-SERM. lue for their own Services! Accordingly, we X. find, their Fasts were charged with very fignal defects; and from this Expostulation it self, it is obvious to take notice,

2. Secondly of their Impatience. It was observed before, that many wise Ends of Providence are sometimes served, by the withholding of temporal advantages. The Observation will be yet clearer; if we suppose only a short suspension, and that God does but for a time forbear the granting of those Benefits, which he will not finally deny. The argument from hence is obvious, that we should patiently wait till God's appointed time, and not take occasion of complaint or murmuring, because our expectations are not satisfied immediately, nor the Divine Favour extended to us, exactly in that manner we propose to ourselves.

Such insolent behaviour indeed can arise from nothing else, but the same Presumption, which was mention'd before: whilst the man, who is truly mortified under the sense of his Sins, will no more dare to set a time for God's bestowing his Favours, than presume he has deserv'd any; but trust wholly to his Goodness, both for the one and the other; and commit himself into the hands of God, as unto a faithful Creator. It may possibly be the very End, why God delays his Favour; to give occasion for the exercise of this Virtue

X. in our Devotions; and teach us by manifold repulses to wait upon him in humility of Soul, and look upon That, as the most proper seafon for our relief and rescue; not when we are pleased to ask it; but when he shall see

fit to grant our request.

Till thus the trying of our Faith, has wrought in us this effect of Patience; and till this Patience has had ber perfect work, (under some proper allowances for the infirmities of human Nature) there is just ground to conclude, we are not duly humbled, our exorbitant affections are not mortified within us: and no wonder then, if God suspend the Favours, for which we are not qualified; till by our humble submission to his Will, we shall have given better proof of our Amendment, and testified the sincerity of our Humiliation, by continuing therein with all Perseverance.

Here then is manifest occasion for suspicion, that the boasted Fasting of those mentioned in the Text was vain and hypocritical; and were we not more expressly assured of their villany; yet this impatient murmuring would be enough to convince us, that they were not yet brought to that Humility of Soul, from which alone they could have ground to hope for any acceptance of their outward Services.

Once more,

3. Thirdly, to their Presumption and Impatience, we may add their Infidelity. Next

to our belief of the Being of a God, it is ne- SERM. ceffary, in order to found a rational Worship of him, that we should believe him to be a rewarder of them that diligently feek bim. In this, we shall confess his Wisdom, to discern our wants; and his Power, to supply them: but above all, his Goodness, to reach out such Supplies, as shall upon all accounts be most fitting and convenient. Without the belief of all these Attributes together, we could never address ourselves to him, but with much doubt and diffidence. But when once we are firmly persuaded and convinc'd of Them. we approach with boldness to the throne of grace; and are so far from murmuring, when the Event succeeds not according to our expectations; that we impute it only to our own ignorance, who are not able to fathom the defigns of Providence, nor look into the iffue of the whole matter; which would abundantly vindicate these present distributions of Him, who feeth not as man feeth.

It must be therefore from an evil heart of unbelief, that the opposite murmurings and complaints arise; either from a suspicion, that our groanings may be hid from him; or from some apprehension, that his hand may be shorten'd that it cannot save us from our trouble; or lastly, from a distrust of his Goodness, that he has no inclination to exert his Power to succour and relieve us. Such, doubtless, was the case of these murmurers in the Text, who.

X.

SERM. who, however they might know God, or have fufficient notices made to them of his Being and Attributes; yet glorified bim not as God; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darken'd. Immediately they impeach'd his Justice or his Goodness; if he fail'd of answering their presumptuous expectations. Wherefore have we fasted, Say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our foul, and thou takest no knowledge? Which was in them the more abfurd and monstrous; because this Fasting and Affliction, they boafted of so much, was nothing elfe, after all, but meer formality and outward shew: whilst their ordinary practice still continued as exorbitant, and their inward affections unmortified as ever. Which leads me in order to the

> III. THIRD view, in which this paffage was proposed to be confider'd; namely, as it points out to these Hypocrites the several defects of their pretended Humiliation; and fo implies withal a pertinent direction how to order our religious Fasts in such manner, as God chooses and accepts. Behold in the day of your Fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fift of wickedness. In which words their pretended Humiliations are upbraided, with those very Lusts and evil Dispositions; the subduing whereof ought to have been their principal Defign: namely,

1. Senfual

Behold in the day of your fast, you find pleasure. X.

2. Covetousness and Oppression, which arise from worldly Affections: and exact all your labours. And,

3. Uncharitableness, and a contentious Spirit: Bebold, ye fast for strife and debate, and

to smite with the fift of wickedness.

1. First, I begin with the first of these defects, charged upon their pretended Humiliation; namely, the continuance of fenfual and unmortified Affections: Behold, in the day? of your fast, you find pleasure. If by the day of their fast, we understand strictly the very day appropriated to fuch Humiliation; then this passage upbraids them with a partial or counterfeit Affliction of themselves, that it had nothing in it truly mortifying, but only in appearance: or at least, that if they deny'd themselves in one respect, they indulg'd in another; and contriv'd some way to gratify their Appetite for fenfual Pleasure. They utter'd themselves indeed in doleful Lamentations, and made their voices to be beard on bigh. They might use that Fasting, which would commonly pass for the Affliction of the Soul. They might bow down their beads as bulrushes, and spread sackeloth and ashes under them. But all this, perhaps, was only matter of their publick behaviour, put on for Form and Oftentation; whilst they took the opportunity, in fecret, to pursue their VOL. II. wonted

SERM. wonted pleasures: and if not to indulge them-

felves at rich Collations; yet to steal, at least, fuch Diversions and Amusements, as should destroy the very End of fasting; and prevent that inward forrow and compunction requir-

ed upon fuch occasions.

Again, the day of their fast may be explain'd of the evening immediately succeeding it; that tho' they might endure the severities of the day; yet they made splendid preparations to entertain themselves at night: that their present Fasting serv'd only to whet their appetite for more delicious Banquets; and the other feverities which they endured gave them but the greater gust for vain and sensual fatisfactions: that however in the morning, they might appear to afflict themselves with weeping and with mourning with baldness, and girding with sackcloth; yet in the evening behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine, according to the Epicure's maxim, let us eat and drink; for to monrow we shall die *.

And who then can imagine, such extravagant deportment should consist with true Mortification? For tho' no Fast can be defign'd for a perpetual Abstinence from those fatisfactions, which the bounty of Providence allows us richly to enjoy; yet a greedy return to them, as foon as ever the minutes appointed for such Abstinence expire, must argue

* Ifai xxii. 12, 13.

that Sorrow to have funk but little way, SERM. which is so easily removed: especially if they X. indulge themselves in them to any enormous excesses, as if they meant to make up for the time which had been lost, and compensate for the rigorous Hardships of the day, by the licentious Revels of the night.

Laftly, the day of their faft may be taken yet more generally for that part, or time of their Life, in which they had taken up these pretences of Amendment, by mortifying and humbling themselves before their God. And if so, then the pleasures, with which they are upbraided, must mean either vicious and unlawfob pleasures; or lawful ones at least purfoed to an exorbitant degree. And then, it must be the purport of this reprehension, that however they might appear humbled and demure for a time; yet That frame of countenance; and manner of behaviour, was put on only for the prefent occasion; whill at other times they would be as extravagant in their conduct, and as loofe in their morals, as the most abandon'd and licentions.

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Whichever way you take it, it comes much to the fame, as to the matter before us; that their mortification was but feign'd and hyporritical; that there was no change in their affections, whatever there might be in their appearance; that they were guilty of the fame crime which the Prophet Zechary objects to his cotemporaries, that they had

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SERM. not fasted to the Lord; but were still as much X. sway'd by the dictates of Sense and carnal Appetite, as they had been before those Judgments were inflicted, for which they now pretended to humble and afflict themselves.

From this Example we perceive, that our Humiliations must be made without Partiality and fond Reserves; that we should not only abstain from Delicacies in our food, but from the more gay and jovial Diversions; from Plays and Pastimes, and unnecessary Visits; from every thing, which may imply fuch lightness in our minds, as is wholly incompatible with our folemn professions of Sorrow and Contrition. Much less should we place our Fasting (as some Zealots do) in an Abstinence only from one kind of food, whilst we even feast ourselves to Luxury with others; or in the omission of a single Meal, whilst we intend to eat double at the next, and conclude our Fast with the appearance of a Festival.

And if such care there must be taken, of these outward expressions of our Grief and Concern; much more, no doubt, is it required that that Concern be real; that we rest not in meer Appearances and Forms; that we be inwardly affected with that Godly sorrow, which may work Repentance unto life; which may prevent our returning any more to folly, to those vain and finful pleasures, which we now profess to detest, and therefore must be understood to promise we will pursue no more.

2. Secondly,

2. Secondly, These Hypocrites, notwith-SERM. standing all their fasting, are upbraided with X. worldly, as well as carnal Affections; with Oppression and Avarice, with want of Mercy and Compassion towards others. In the day of their fast they did not only find plea-

fure, but exacted all their labours.

The original word, which we translate labours, is used by a figure, to denote those riches which are gotten by the toil and fatigue either of ourselves or others. For so it is explain'd clearly, in the Book of Proverbs;—lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy LABOURS be in the bouse of strangers *. Whereby a man's having his labours in another's house, must be meant, the wasting of his substance, and transferring it into the hands of others.

And proportionably by exacting his labours, in the style of the Mosaick Law, must be meant his rigorous insisting upon payment, where the debtor had not ability to make it. For so the notion of exaction is stated in the Law of the sabbatick year. At the end of every seven years, thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it, he shall not exact it of his neighbour . And that this Law was not meant to extend to every case; but only to such debtors as were poor and insolvent, may

* Prov. v. 10. † Deut. xv. 1, 2.

SERM. appear both from that limitation, which fol-X. lows quickly after, fave when there shall be no

poor among you *; (intimating clearly, that they might require payment of all others;) and from the caution, which is yet farther subjoin'd, that this builtom of release should not incline them, when that feventh year approached, to barden their heart, or fout their band against their POOR brother; but they should by all means open their hand wide unto him, and should furthy lend him fufficient for his need to This crime of EXACTION would, no doubt, be greatly aggravated, if the Debt itself arose from some act of injustice and oppression; if they had taken any unreasonable advantage of their brother's necessity, and were not ashamed, as they had opportunity, to grind the faces of the poor. For then their present exaction, of what at first was wrongfully extorted, would be but a fresh allowance and repetition of the crime. And therefore it is declared, in the verse next but one after the Text, to be the proper Bnd of a religious Fast; that they, who have been guilty of any fuch uncharitable griping and extortion, should make faithful restitution for the injuries they have done, and be careful for the future, that they do no more. Is not this the fast that I have thosen? to hose the bands of wickedness, to undo the beavy burdens.

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and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye SERM. break every yoke *? X.

Nor was it enough, that they abstained from actual Injuries, or made amends for such as had been done; they must proceed farther, to acts of Almsgiving and Liberality; to open their band wide (as the Law terms it) to their brother, to the poor and needy in their land +. For so the Prophet goes on; Is it not to deal thy bread to the bungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy bouse? when thou seess the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine

own flesh !?

Whilst therefore these Jewish Hypocrites were so notoriously guilty in this particular, so far from extending Mercy to the Poor, that they unmercifully griped and cruelly oppressed them; with what face could they expect to have their Fasts accepted? Could those Souls be duly humbled before God, which were fo unreasonably exalted among men? Could those Hearts be softened and contrite under the sense of Guilt, which to all Impressions of Pity were harder than an adamant? Or could they be supposed to love God in Sincerity, whom they had never feen; whilst they retained such hatred, and shut up their Bowels, against their Brethren, whom they bad? No; the counterfeit is here too gross to be concealed; and with what mea-

^{*} Isaiah lviii. 6. † Deut. xv. 11. ‡ Isaiah lviii. 7.

SERM. fure they did mete, they must expect it should X. be measured to them again. If they would find Mercy from God, they must shew it to their Brethren, and strive to be bountiful as well as just. For so again it follows, a few Verses after; If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the singer and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfie the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy

darkness be as the noon day *.

There is indeed a twofold Reason, why the Duty of Alms should be annexed to That of Fasting. The first, because they are Duties of a like kind; they are both of them proper acts of Self-denial, both voluntary Mulcts or Punishments upon ourselves: and as Fasting implies a fense of our Unworthiness of daily bread; fo this liberal parting with our money will express a like sense of our Unworthiness. to be fure, of the Riches, or even of the common Comforts and Conveniences of Life; nay they are both necessary means of disengaging our Affections from any unreasonable attachment to these perishing Enjoyments; and fo of qualifying us for that uniform Submission to the Will of God, which is required in them, who would serve him in newness of Life. And therefore as Fasting is often recommended to this purpose, so it was the Prophet Daniel's advice to King Nebuchadnez-

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^{*} Ifaiah lviii. 9, 10.

zar; that he would break off his fins by righteouf- SERM. nefs, (or Almsgiving, as that word often fignifies in Scripture) and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity 1.

The other Reason for joining them together, is, because whilst in fasting we retrench our usual expences, by giving away what is so faved and more, we shall escape the scandal of fasting only to save charges; and evince it to be in truth a matter of bounty, not of covetousness.

3. Thirdly The last Objection made to the fasting of these Hypocrites, is their uncharitable and contentious Spirit: Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fift of

wickedness. ban shoot livio There were some among the Jews, who fasted meerly out of Vanity and Ostentation; to be seen of men, and reckoned more excellent than their Neighbours: who, tho' they neglected the weightier matters of the law; yet whilst they were exact in these external, feemly Formalities, trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others *; like those other Hypocrites, elsewhere mentioned by this Prophet, which faid, fland by thy felf, come not near to me; for I am bolier than thou +. Such was the Case of the vainglorious Pharisee, who stood and prayed thus with himself; God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; or even as this Publican. 7

‡ Dan. iv. 27. Luke xviii. 9. † Isaiah lxv. 5. falt SERM. fast revice in the week | For such, it is no X. wonder, if their superficial Services be rejected by the Searcher of hearts; if whilst they fast meerly out of Strife and Contention, they be reckoned only as an offensive smoke in his nose, a fire that burneth all the day; if, lastly, whilst it is their principal aim to be distinguished in the eye of the world for men of an uncommon Severity, they be left to seek their reward only among men; and verily I

fay unto you, they have their reward.

But it may be, there is formething more intended by this Fasting for strife and debate. Their wanting to fmite with the fift of wickedness, looks as if the Yewish State was at that time divided by civil feuds and diffentions; and implacably bent upon each other's overthrow. Their Fasting for that purpose, looks moreover, as if they meant to colour their deligns with Pretences of Religion, and to draw in God himfelf for a Party in the Quarrel This, in both fides would be highly unreasonable; because we may not pray to God to gratify our private Revenge; and altho' our Cause should be most just and equitable; yet we ought not to wish for its support in the destruction, but rather in the conversion of our enemies. But, in one fide it must be most smazingly monstrous: for what can be more highly impious, than that they whose Cause is founded in iniquity, and the defiance of all law,

Toke Will 14, 12. Take 1

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should invoke the righteous Judge of all the SERM. earth on their fide, and expect his Affistance, X. who is not the God of confusion, but of peace?

But whether such were the condition of the Tewish State or no; we are fure there have been those among ourselves, who have held frequent Fastings, and made long Prayers for luccess to the most execrable Treasons; and have even then pretended to be feeking the Lord, when they embrued their hands in the blood of his Anointed. There can be no just ground to hope such Fasts should be accepted; when the very end or defign of them is fo foul and detertable: and if God should at any time suffer fuch defighs to prosper, it is not because he hears the Prayers, or regards the Fastings of such audacious wretches; but to fulfil some other wife Purposes of Providence, reserving these Offenderstoa farther time of Vengeance, to fuftain that recompense of their error which is meet.

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bloom the whole matter we perceive, that folong as the End of our Fasting is to pursue some unlawful and sorbidden Purpose; so long as the method of it is nothing else but an outward appearance of afflicting Severities, without any real Humiliation of Soul, or change in our Affections; so long as we shew Love only with our mouths, but in our hearts go after Covetousness or Ambition, or any other kind of Lust, our Services must be vain and insignificant: and however we may haply impose upon the world by such specious Forms-

204 Hypocritical Fasting expos'd &c.

X. our own felves, thro' partiality and fond prejudice, fatisfied with vain conceits of opus operatum, or not enquiring enough into the state and condition of our souls; yet God will not be so mocked or deceived: but be that pondereth the heart will be sure to consider it thoroughly *; and will render to every man, not according to the outward appearance; but according to the inward Sincerity and real Virtue of his Works.

And does not our beart then burn within us, while we are talking of these things? Does it not fmite and reproach us, at the remembrance of our past coldness and indifference in our most solemn Humiliations and Approaches to God? How careless we have been at best, if not altogether infincere and hypocritical? Let this reflection be improved to quicken our Zeal and Diligence in the Duties of this holy Season; that we may no more incur the Guilt of drawing near to him with our lips, when our hearts are far from him; of punishing our bodies, without afflicting our fouls; of fasting for none else but vain or senfual purposes; but may so worship God in spirit and in truth, so humble ourselves before the Searcher of hearts, that he in his due time may lift us up to spiritual Joy and Confolation in this life present, and in the world to come may raise us to eternal life, through Jefus Christ our Lord: To whom, &c.

SERMON XI.

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JUSTIFICATION the Privilege of good Christians.

ROM. viii. 33, 34

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

C. T. Paul having in this Epistle unanswer-SERM. ably afferted, that the Salvation proposed XI. in the Gospel is a Privilege not due to us in a state of nature; (wherein we appear sinners, and ungodly trangressors of the Law, and as fuch exposed to the vengeance of the Lawgiver;) nor merited by any works of legal righteousness; (which since no man can perfectly discharge, our deficiency therein must leave us liable to the Curse and Condemnation of the Law;) but meerly the effect of God's Grace and Mercy thro' Christ, redeeming us from the Curfe, to which we were by nature liable; (from which no legal obedience of our own could rescue us;) propofing

XI.

SERM. pofing to us the way and means of reconciliation, and so putting it to our own choice and option to be happy if we will: Having done all this, in the former part of the Epiftle, he proceeds in the first verse of the Chapter before us, to fum up the matter, briefly thus: that there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not afthe flesh, but after the spirit: i. e. that they, who are received into the Communion and Fellowship of Christs Church, and pay fuch an Obedience of Faith, as shews them to be transformed and renewed in the spirit of their mind, shall be thereupon entitled to the Benefits of his Redemption, and rescued from the Curse and Condemnation of the Law; from that Wrath and Vengeance of God they could not otherwise escaped and the

From hence, he takes occasion, so let forth the Terms of the Covenant of Grace, upon which this Salvation is proposed; to arge the necessity of a spiritual Life; to state the Privilege of Adoption hereupon confer'd, and to arm the Partakers of this Privilege with Patience under afflictions, as not able, in reality, to annoy or injure them: 'till from this mention of the impotence of human malice, he refumes his former Conclusion, and breaks out in this triumphant Exclamation; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is berthat condemneth? It is Christ that died, year ather that

is risen again, who is even at the right hand SERM. of God, who also maketh intercession for us. XI. As if he had faid; "Tis evident then, beyond contradiction, that there can be no Impeachment brought against the true Christian, there can no Sentence of Condemnation be pronounced upon him: For who shall pretend to accuse us, or what Accusation need we fear, when the God we have provoked, himfelf becomes our Patron, and frankly forgives. wherein we have offended him? Or who shall prefume to centure and condemn us; whose fentence need we value on be concerned at: when Christ, who is our proper Judge, is the very Person that has bought us with his Blood; and has fince that rifen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, there to plead our Cause, and appear an Advocate in the presence of God for us? ll be fare or

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What shall we then say to these things? (as the Apostle puts the question in the verse next but one before the Text) if God be for us, who can be against us? If we have our Pardon from our injured Sovereign, and are acquitted by him, who is ordained our Judge; what need we be in sear of any sellow Criminals, or apprehend the Sentence and Opinion of those, who sand impleaded at the same Bar with our selves, and can have no Au-

Nor will the sense of this Passage be greatly varied, if we should (as some Interpreters would SERM, would have us) read the whole Period interrogatory, thus: -Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? Shall God that justiheth? Who is be that condemneth? Is it Christ that died, yea rather that is rifen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us? Which Reading feems to be not a little countenanced, by the continuance of the same stile in the following Verse, where the interrogation is manifestly necessary; Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, &c.? I say the Senfe is not hereby greatly varied. For still it implies, that God, who justifies, cannot accuse the Elect; and that they need fear no one elfe; that Christ, who died to redeem them; who also rose again, and is exalted at God's right hand, to be their Advocate and intercede for them, will be fure not to condemn them; and that they have nothing to fear or apprehend from the Sentences of others.

In discoursing farther from the Words, I

shall take occasion

I. To infift, in general, upon the Nature and Conditions of that Salvation, which the Gospel proposes, that *Justification* of the *Elect*, which gives them Confidence before God, and secures them from the danger of any Condemnation. And then

II. To explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption by Christ's Death,

and

and Refurrection, and Exaltation at the right SERM. hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in XI. the Presence of the Father, and make for ever Intercession for us.

I. FIRST then, I would insist in general, upon the nature and conditions of that Salvation, which the Gospel proposes, that fustification of the Elect, which gives them confidence before God, and secures them from the danger of any Condemnation. For the clearing of which Point, I shall consider,

1. The Character of the persons entitled to this Privilege; and they are God's Elect.

2. The Privilege itself at present bestowed, as an earnest of suture Happiness, viz. fustification before God. It is God that jus-

tifieth. And then,

3. The great satisfaction to be taken in this Privilege, or the freedom they enjoy from the power of any accusation or condemning sentence. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. Of these severally in their order. And,

1. First then, I begin with considering the Character of the persons entitled to this Privilege; and they are God's Elect. Now, whatever wild notions some may have conceiv'd of the Election of God, sondly imagining it to be the certain and arbitrary fore-appointment of such and such particular persons to eternal Happiness; whilst the rest of

Vol. II. P man-

SERM. mankind are left or given up to the domini-XI. on of their natural corruptions, and so cut off from any share in that Salvation by Cbrist: yet if we would take our notions of this matter from those accounts, which are given of it in Scripture, we should find it does, in its first and primary sense, mean nothing more than our being receiv'd into the Church of God, our being admitted to "the means of

and so put in the way to partake of everlasting

"Grace and hopes of Glory," at present,

Happiness hereafter.

This is justly reputed the Election or Choice of God, in a twofold respect; both as the persons so admitted are separated from the rest of mankind, and chosen to these glorious Privileges before others; who are left to the darkness of their own reasonings, and the obscure impressions of natural Religion: and likewise as there is nothing, on their part, to engage God to it; but they being themfelves unworthy, and wretchedly polluted with Sin, it is meerly the effect of his own free Choice, his Grace and Bounty. Thus Christians in general (as the Israelites of old) are reckon'd by St. Peter a chosen or elect generation; and That for this very reason, because God had called them out of darkness into bis marvellous light *.

But this cannot, I judge, be St. Paul's meaning in the Text; because many, who are

* 1 Pet, ii. 9.

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thus elected, or admitted to a visible commu-SERM. nion with the Church, are yet liable to various accusations, and shall not be finally justified before God; and confequently can have no right to have this glorious challenge made in their behalf: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth. Accordingly our bleffed Saviour, we find, makes a manifest distinction between them, who are thus called or admitted to the means of Grace, and them that are chosen or elected afterwards. He does this, in the application of a Parable, design'd to represent the state of the Christian Church, confisting of visible Members, both good and bad; both fuch as answer the end of their Vocation, and such as answer it not. The called therefore, in this place, are such as are receiv'd into the Christion Church, and fo admitted to the means and hopes of Salvation. But the Cholen or Elect are not all that partake of this outward Privilege; but only fuch of them, as walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, and fo answer the gracious ends and purposes of him who called them. And these are very pertinently denominated the Elect or Chosen of God: because all fuch as thus obey his Call, fuch as not only comply with the external Terms of Communion, but render him the spiritual and acceptable obedience of Faith, and conform their minds, their wills, and their affections, to the holy precepts and com-P 2 mands

SERM. mands of his Religion; all such he graciously XI. CHOOSES to himself, pardoning their offences thro' Christ, exempting them from the Punishment of the ungodly, adopting them for his own Children, and making them heirs of everlasting Happiness. Which leads me to the

2. Second thing proposed to be consider'd under this Head; namely, the Privilege at present bestowed on the Elect, as an earnest of their future Happiness, viz. Justification: It is God that justifieth. Justification, according to the known use of that word in Scripture, must be explain'd in a forensick sense, to fignify the acquitting of those persons, (or treating them, in a judicial way, as just, innocent or righteous persons,) who stood indicted or accused of Crimes committed against the Majesty of God. By acquitting indeed we do not understand (as that word imports commonly in human Courts of Judicature) that the party fo indicted or accused should be declared never to have committed the Facts laid to his charge, nor in consequence of them, been guilty and delinquent. For inasmuch as all bave sinned and come short of the glory of God; we must of ourselves be liable to the fanctions of his Law: and should he be extream to mark what is done amis; there could, in this sense, no flesh living be justified before him. But we mean, the discharging of them from the imputation of Sin, who in themselves were certainly delinquent; and SERM. so indeed absolving them from the guilt of XI. their Crimes; and thereby from the obligation they were under to Punishment on their account.

That This is the true import of Justification in the facred Scriptures, might appear from various instances. I shall produce but one; and that shall be that remarkable one of St. Paul in the Acts: Be it known unto you brethren, that thro' this man is preach'd unto you the forgiveness of fins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses *. Here that, which had been first called forgiveness of sins, is afterwards (we see) explain'd farther, and carried on to fuch cases, as the Law could not reach, under the name of Justification. To be justified FROM a thing, can manifestly mean no less than the being cleared from fomething, which (if fuffer'd to remain) must be a stain and blemish. And had the Apostle only meant a declaration of innocence, with regard to facts never committed, or which, if committed, were not really criminal; the Gospel, in that respect, would be but ill opposed to the Law; fince no Law can be so rigorous, as to charge them with Guilt, who are perfectly innocent and clear of Offence: and therefore if this had been the meaning or defign of the word, the

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* Acts xiii. 38, 39.

S_{ERM}. Law and the Gospel would both justify XI. alike.

So then, to know how far the Mosaick Law could justify, we must enquire, what provision it made for the forgiveness of Sins; how far its transgressors were allow'd an Expiation; and wherein it fell short and left them destitute of remedy. It provided then a remedy against those legal impurities, or ritual pollutions, which the numerous observances and exact niceties of the Law made often unavoidable. It provided likewife against the leffer offences; against Sins of ignorance and infirmity; against Sins committed by accident, mistake or inadvertency. For these it prescribed certain Sacrifices; which, as on the offender's part they were acknowledgments of his crime, so on God's they were accepted as atonements for it. But there was no mention of pardon to presumptuous Offences, or fuch as were reckon'd to be done with fettled pride and contempt of the Lawgiver's authority. They were fometimes punished with death, and always (whether by men discover'd or not) they were left to the just Judgment of God; without any express promise of forgiveness in the Law itself, tho' upon the severest Repentance, and bitterest Remorfe. The Law prescribed no Sacrifices to expiate or atone for them. For thou defirest no facrifice, elfe would I give it thee, faid David, when he labour'd under the guilt and burden of Murther and Adultery. In-

Indeed, as the legal impurities, which were SERM. expiated by the Law, did figure out the XI. moral uncleanness and pollution of our nature; fo there is no doubt, but the Sacrifices prescribed for the expiation of such impurities, did likewise figure out that perfect Sacrifice of Christ, by which we are deliver'd, as well from the power, as the punishment of Sin. They then who could fee into this spiritual meaning and defign of the Law, might doubtless derive comfort to themselves, and affurances of pardon. But then it ought to be remember'd, that the Law of Mofes, thus confider'd and explain'd, is nothing else but the Gospel in another view: And when they are opposed to one another, and the Law is described as bringing into bondage and death; it is then confider'd by itself, and in the naked Letter; as it contains à rigorous prescription of Duty, and could provide no expiation of its own for prefumptuous Offences.

But what the law could not do in that it was weak, That Christ has done for us. He has offer'd a full and perfect Sacrifice for Sin: so that thro' him, we are now justified from all things, from which we could not have been justified by the law of Moses. God has accepted this his Sacrifice, as the price of our Redemption, an ample satisfaction for our manifold Offences; and has declared his acceptation of it by raising him from the dead, and placing him at his own right hand.

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SERM. And who then shall venture to dispute or call this Justification of God's Elect in ques-XI. tion; when he confiders the authority by which it is done, and that it is God that justifieth? For tho' we are sometimes said to be justified by FAITH, yet, it is easy to distinguish between the Author of this Privilege, and the Condition of bestowing it. Faith in Chrift, as our Saviour and Redeemer, is the condition on our part, required to qualify and fit us for the reception of this Privilege; and indeed the means of making application of it to ourselves in particular, and that too (we may observe by the way) not a dead, fruitless ineffectual Faith, but such as is fruitful of

> From hence then, we are said to be justified by faith, or upon account of our having that qualifying Condition: and therefore when we find it said, it is GoD that justifieth; we must have another notion of the phrase, and understand Him mention'd as the Author of our Justification, as the Judge acquitting and absolving us, and so receiving us into his

good works and operates by love.

Favour and Protection.

This, if it be understood of Christ, is true of him immediately, he being the person appointed of the Father to be the Judge of quick and dead. He therefore justifies or pardons all that truly believe in him: and since the Divine Nature is in him, personally united to the human; it may be said properly of him, that

that it is God that justifieth. Or if it be un-Sermederstood here of the Father; (as one would ra-XI. ther imagine;) it is to be consider'd, that as the actions of each person in the Trinity are common to all the three; so in this instance of Judgment it cannot be understood, that when the Father committed all judgment to the Son, he did thereby cease to be Judge himself; but only that the Person of the Son was more eminently display'd and manifested in it.

From this confideration of the Privilege and its Author, let us go on now in the

3. Third place, to confider the great fatisfaction and comfort to be taken in it, or the freedom which persons thus justified enjoy from the power of any accusation, or condemning sentence: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.

Not that we are to suppose from hence they shall perfectly escape accusations and censures of all kinds! Those are the works of enemies, and therefore 'till good men shall have no enemies remaining; they must not expect to be altogether free from accusations. Their Adversary the Devil, in particular, rages against them with such implacable and restless fury, that he is from thence emphatically called, the Accuser of the brethren. He has his Agents and Instruments every where at work; and it

SERM. is equal to them, be the accusation true or XI. false, so they can but occasion any mischief to the Church of God. For which reason we have no grounds to expect it should escape the slander of malicious men, instigated and supported in their charge by the Father of Lies, and grand enemy of all Righteousness.

But be their Malice as restless and indefatigable as it will; yet what can all their Essorts do before the Bar of God? Will he be awed or biassed, flattered or deceived? Does he want their information, or will he give credit to their calumnies? No. They may sometimes do us prejudice in human courts; they may get us censured or condemned by men. But who would value their Sentence, that is secure of a Pardon in Heaven? Who would not rather, in that case, exclaim with the Apostle?—If God be for us, who can be against us?

It was not then his meaning, that no one would condemn, that no one would accuse the Elect; but that nothing of this nature could do them any real or final Injury; so long as they had God on their side, and had secured to themselves an Interest in the Death of Christ. And then the case is plain and evident. For who, can we imagine, should succeed in his Suit against those, whom God will justify? Who, can we conceive, should have Interest enough to condemn those, whom Christ has died to save?

Not

Not that we have any grounds from hence SERM. to conclude for the absolute Indefectibility of XI. Grace; or that it is in the nature of the thing impossible to decline or fall away from this State of Salvation into Sin and Wickedness! Much less (which yet some have blasphemoully taught) that the Elect may commit the greatest Enormities without falling from that State, or being guilty before God: for that, God beholds no Sin in them: but graciously overlooks and pardons every thing they do. This is indeed to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; it is to use our liberty for an occasion to the sless, and convert the wholsome Doctrine of the Gospel into a cloak of maliciousness. But furely there can be no just grounds for such an Inference from the Pasfage before us. Most true indeed it is, that the Elect shall have their Sins pardoned and wiped away, and not placed to their account. For they whom God finally receives to Glory, must needs be freed from the Charge and Imputation of Sin. And 'tis (as we have feen) in this remission or forgiveness of fins, that this glorious Privilege of Justification does properly confift.

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But then, who are the Persons thus said to be elected or justified? Not any, who wilfully and presumptuously offend against the Precepts of Religion; not any, who abose the Mercies they enjoy, and glory in their shame; but they, who readily pay an evangelical Obe-

dience,

XI. wholly prevent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance; who, in one word, walk worthy of their Christian Vocation, and so answer the gracious Ends and Purposes of him who called them. Such Children then of Light are they, whom God is said to justify. But if they deviate from this Character, and walk in Darkness; they forseit then their Privilege, and that Freedom from Condemnation, which is here promised them: all their former righteousness shall not be remembered; but for their wilful and continued Disobedience they shall surely die.

The Improvement I would make of this

discourse shall be in few words.

1. First, let us humbly admire and thankfully adore that Goodness of God, who has thus graciously been pleased to call us to this State of Salvation; to make us the kind Offers of Mercy; to fend his Son to procure and propose to us Terms of Reconciliation, and call us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the fons of God. Not so, dealt he with the Angels that finned; but cast them down to bell: he left them to that Misery they brought upon themselves, and gave them up to Ruin and Damnation. But, when Man had forfeited his Favour, by transgressing his Command; he graciously provided a Remedy in the Son of his dience

his Love, who took not on him the nature of SERM.

Angels, but the feed of Abraham.

XI.

2. Secondly, let us take care however to make this our calling and election fure. For these Privileges, we see, are not to be bestewed promiscuously on all, who become visible Members of the Church of Christ. No. For the there is many, who are thus called, yet but sew are chosen. And they then only are the chosen, they only are the Elect of God, whom he at last will justify, and who thro the Merits of the Death of Christ, shall be freed from Condemnation.

Now, who are these Elect, and entitled to this Justification, we have already seen; they are fuch only as walk worthy of their high Calling; they are only fuch whose lively Faith in Christ exerts itself in a suitable Obedience, tho' not perfect and finless, yet unfeigned and fincere. And how highly then does it concern us all to take heed to our ways, to conform our Faith and Practice to the Golpel Rule, that so we may be found in the Number of those, whom God at last will choose? How should it caution even those that stand, to take heed lest they fall, to beware lest any root of bitterness spring up, which by withdrawing them from their first Stedfastness, may forfeit their Title to these glorious Privileges, and make them decline from that Grace of God wherein they now stand.

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3. Thirdly, Being satisfied in the Reflections of a good Conscience; let us entertain an humble confidence, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let us despise all menaces or allurements below; and remember there is no motive can be here proposed, which is worthy to be compared with that abundant glory, which shall hereafter be revealed in us. Whom need we fear, or what more should we defire; when we have made him our Friend, who is our King and Judge? What, tho' the Heathen rage, and the rulers take their counsel together; nay, what the the very earth were moved, and the bills were carried into the midst of the sea? So long as God is for us, who can be against us? Whilf he justifies us, what Accusation shall we be in pain for? or what Condemnation shall we apprehend or dread; when Christ, who is to judge us at the last day, and whose Sentence must be finally decifive of our Doom, is the very Person that died to redeem us; yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us? Which might lead me in order to the SECOND Head proposed. But that must be reserved for the Subject of our future Meditations. Now to God the Father, God the Son &c.

> following a chart street both Colored And the Colored Parad.

SERMON XII.

The Death of Christ a proper Satisfaction.

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R O M. viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is be that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Aving treated in general, of the Nature SERM. and Conditions of our Justification and XII. Salvation, which was the FIRST Head proposed, I proceed now in order, in the

II. SECOND place, to explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption by Christ's Death and Resurrection and Exaltation at the right Hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the Presence of the Father, to plead our Cause and intercede in our behalf. It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Of all which Particulars severally and distinctly in their order. And

1. First

SERM. I. First, in treating of the Death of Christ, XII. I shall take occasion to do these three things viz.

(1.) To confirm or prove the Certainty of

the Fact, that Christ did actually die.

(2.) To explain the End of his Death, viz. the Redemption and Salvation of the Elect. And then

(3.) To enquire more exactly into the Nature of the Satisfaction of the Death of Christ.

(1.) First then, I am to confirm or prove the Certainty of the Fact, that Christ did

actually die.

There were some Hereticks of old, who taught that Christ was man, no otherwise than in appearance or outward shew; that he affumed only an imaginary body, or some airy vehicle, and so became visible in form of man, without being cloathed in reality with human flesh. They who believed his Incarnation to be thus imaginary, must of consequence suppose his Death and Sufferings imaginary too; unless a Phantom may be put to pain; or That expire and die, which never lived. But, if we make the Oracles of God the Rule of our judgment in this matter; we shall there find such Proofs of his real Incarnation, as can no way be evaded; fuch express mention of his Conception and Birth, his Family and Kindred, his increasing in Stature like other men, his various Works and Discourses with the Jews; that we may as well

well believe our felves to be meer Spectres SERM. and Phantoms, as imagine Him to have been XII. no more.

But of all the Proofs to be produced of this kind, there is none more convincing, than the Evidence we have of his Death and Burial. Among which, I suppose, I need not urge, that This was expresly foretold in the old Testament, and is as expresly related in the new; that it behoved Christ thus to suffer and to enter into bis glory, and that he did accordingly. So far as this, is known to every body; and the Meaning of the Scripture, in that Point, is too plain to be disputed: That conceit of fome Novelists among us, that these things are to be figuratively understood, altho' told in the most naked, unexceptionable terms, being too light and fanciful, to want a ferious confutation.

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Instead then of insisting on the Authority of Scripture, let us attend a little to the Circumstances of the Fact, as it is there related; which are such as do effectually take off all suspicion of Imposture in the matter. Let it therefore be considered, in the first place, that the care of putting him to death was committed to his Enemies. The Roman Soldiers, who had already mocked and derided him, had now their barbarous Malice supported by the Governor's Authority. They were attended and affished by the Jewish Rabble; who loaded him now with reproaches and Vol. II

XII. ed with Hosannas, and applauded as the son of David. And they were all pushed on by the bloody Zeal of the chief Priests and Rulers; whose love of earthly greatness and felicity had given a wrong turn to their Interpretation of Scripture; and made them, whilst they expected a temporal Prince, re-

ject the true Meshab, and Saviour of Mankind. All these, no doubt, together would take care, to make fure of the work they were about. Their malice could not fail to prompt them punctually to execute the direful fentence, and fee him past recovery, whom they fo implacably purfued. And yet, if any fufpicion could be left of their shewing him fayour, of their relenting when they faw his fufferings, or abating the rigor of their malice towards him; yet all That too will be entirely taken off, when it is farther confider'd, that his body, after this, was committed to his friends: who doubtless, had there been any, but the least remains of life, would have been careful to improve the flattering prospect, and, with their Master, to have revived their languid hopes. But does any thing of this nature appear? No; they buried him :--- and were so far from thinking of restoring him to life, that with the arts of embalming, at that time usual with the Jews, they were preparing to secure his body against that stench and putrefaction, to which dead bodies otherwise

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are liable. And now they, who can believe SERM. him for all this, not to have been dead, whose body his enemies had granted to his friends; and his friends had committed to the grave; they may believe, for ought I fee, that we have none but dead men walking about our streets, whilst our Church-yards are filled with living. This is indeed a Truth, which is freely granted to us by the most implacable adversaries of our Religion. Both Yews and Heathens are willing to admit, that Jesus did expire on the cross: and they mention it as the reproach of Christianity; that He, whom we profess to follow, should be treated with such indignity: Whilst it is the distinguishing Character of the true Christian, to glory in the cross of Christ, and esteem That to be matter of the justest confolation, which they would urge to our difhonour.

Such Evidence then have we for the proof of this important Article: An Article which will appear to be of the utmost weight and

consequence, when I shall, in the

(2.) Second place, have explain'd the End of his Death, viz. the Redemption and Salvation of the Elect. For to them St. Paul has manifestly restrain'd it in the passage now before us. He is speaking of the Privileges of the Elect or Chosen of God; and their exemption, upon account of those privileges, from the danger of any accusation, which can be Q 2 brought

SERM. brought against them. Who shall lay any XII. thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth, viz. the same persons, the Elect? It is Christ that died. Christ has offer'd up himself a Sacrifice for them, to redeem them from that Curse, to which they were by nature liable. And indeed that he died for the Salvation of all fuch, as fincerely believe in and obey him, is so very plainly taught us in numberless Pasfages of the holy Scriptures, that there can be no reasonable doubt remaining in this matter. But there are two other questions, which, tho' by an attentive Reader of the Scriptures they might be eafily determined too, have yet given occasion to very fierce Contentions and tedious Disputes. One is concerning the Extent and Efficacy of this Redemption; whether Christ died for the Elect only, exclusively of all others. The other is concerning the manner or form of it; whether Christ's Death were designed in way of Punishment, to make Satisfaction to the Divine Justice for the Disobedience and Offences of Men.

The latter of these will be considered under the next Particular; and as to the former of them, we are so expresly taught, that Christ died for all, that be gave himself a ransom for all, that be tasted death for every man, and the like; that one would wonder there should be any opposers of the Doctrine of universal

Redem-

Redemption: fince That Doctrine cannot be SERM. laid down in plainer and more express Terms, than those, in which we actually have it delivered to us, in the facred Scriptures. lest any should object the Fact against the Defign; and conclude, that Christ intended not his Death for the Salvation of All; because All shall not be actually saved; we find the Apostle affirming, even of such as perish, that Christ died for them. So fays St. Paul in one place, destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died; and again in another place, by thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. From these places it inevitably follows, that whatever be the Effeet, the Defign was universal; and that Christ came into the world, to be the Saviour, not of this or that man only, but of all mankind. For if he died even for them that perish, there can be no question of the rest; in whom his gracious Purpose is accomplished, by his faving them accordingly.

But what then, it will be asked, is his Design frustrated? Did he fail of Success in what he undertook? Else how comes it, when he died for All, that All should not receive the Benefit and Advantage of his Death? Why no; he gained the End of his Death, altho' many, for whom he died, shall perish: because he died not for All absolutely, but only upon condition, that they should observe the Terms of the Gospel, and

embrace

SERM embrace the Offers that are made them of XII. Salvation. His Merits therefore are sufficient to extend, and are indifferently proposed to All; but shall in fact extend no farther, than to such as comply with those Conditions,

upon which they are proposed.

If then our Saviour's Death has not effectually fecured the Salvation of all those, for whom he died; it is not thro' any Deficiency in his Merits; it is not from any want of Acceptance with the Father; but 'tis meerly thro' the negligence or obstinacy of those men, who are excluded from that invaluable Benefit, to which they might, if they would, have been admitted. So that his Defign of faving All, is hereby by no means frustrated; fince that Design was but conditional, and is therefore accomplished sufficiently in them, in whom that Condition takes place, which must qualify them for the Benefit. From whence we find, that as, on one hand, Christ is called the Saviour or Redeemer of all mankind; because there is nothing wanting, on his part, to bring all men to be faved; fo, on the other hand, he is faid to be the Author of eternal Salvation to them only that obey bim: because in them alone his gracious Purpose takes place; whilst all the rest of Mankind ungratefully refuse their own Mercy, and that out themselves from that Salvation he has purchased for them.

This then being the true state of the case; SERM. the Elect, or they that obey him, being the XII. only Persons, to whom he will actually become the Author of eternal Salvation; we have from hence a plain reason, why St. Paul here mentions it as matter of comfort to such only, and an argument of their Freedom from Condemnation; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.

But fince it may still be asked, which way it should come to pass, that Christ's Death should redeem Mankind from Misery, and entitle them to Happiness; whether it was designed to satisfy the Divine Justice for our Disobedience and Offences; it remains, that

I proceed now, in the

(3.) Third and last place, to enquire a little more particularly, into the nature of the

Satisfaction of the Death of Christ.

Now That, whether we consider the Types of it under the Law, or the more express accounts given of it in the Gospel, will appear to have consisted in his undergoing a vicarious Punishment for us, and submitting to Pain and Ignominy in our stead, that he might rescue and release us from it. From the Types under the Law, this appears; because the legal Sacrifices were manifestly designed, as Expiations or Atonements for the people's Sins; by punishing the Victim with the loss of his Life, instead of them, by whom the Law was violated, and to whom there-

XII. due. For hereby the Sacrifice of Christ was plainly fignified; who, (fince we had forfeited our Lives, our Happiness, and all by our Transgression of the Law of God) submitted himself to Punishment instead of us; and so restored us to the Divine Favour, and gave us a new Title to eternal Life.

The same again is evident from those express Passages of the new Testament, where Christ is said to have died, and given himself for us; to be our redemption; to be made a curse and sin for us; and to have given himfelf a ransom for all. All which and many other expressions do so clearly explain the Nature of Christ's Satisfaction, to have lain in his submitting to Punishment in our stead; that there could be little need of enlarging upon this Subject, had not the wicked industry of some unreasonable men laboured with needless cavils to perplex so plain a truth, and raise a dust to obscure (if possible) and darken, that which shines clearly enough with its own native Lustre.

As fuch, I reckon that great outcry they make of the Injustice of punishing the innocent for the guilty, and requiring of the spotless Lamb of God the Sins of all mankind. Which would indeed be a material objection, if this had been done without his own confent; but can be of no weight or consequence at all, when his voluntary Oblation of him-

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felf is taken into the account: unless we can SERM. suppose he had no right to lay down his Life, XII. which he assured us he had; or contradict one of the most uncontested Maxims of the Schools, that no injury is done to any one who is confenting. It had indeed been unjust to have brought him, right or wrong, to Punishment: and This was the Injustice of Pilate and the Jews, who accused and condemned an innocent Person; who, whatever furrender he might make to God, had made none to them, nor had they any fuch regard to him. Again, it had been no very likely expedient to propitiate the Divine Majesty, to have inflicted on him, without any fuch defign on his part, what the Crimes of others had deserved. But it was, on the other hand, no way unfeemly or unjust, it was indeed every way just and honourable, and worthy of God, to accept of that Atonement, which he offered to make, by appearing as our Sponfor or Proxy, and submitting to Punishment in our stead.

There was no necessity indeed, that his Punishment should be perfectly the same, in all its circumstances, with that, to which for our Offences we ourselves were liable. This, instead of perfecting, had defeated our Redemption. For Christ was not only to die for our Sins, but to rife again likewise for our justification; to ascend into heaven; to appear there as our Advocate in the Presence

SERM. of the Father, and to bestow such gists con-XII. tinually, as are necessary for his Church. All this must have been frustrated; unless he had first led captivity captive, and subdued those enemies, by which he must himself have been subdued; if he had for ever remained under the Sentence of Death, and selt all that miserable Despair and Horror, which belonged to

But then, such is the nature of vicarious Punishments, that the *Penalty* itself, as well as the *Person*, may be changed; and such was, in this case, the Dignity of the Person suffering, as rendered the Exchange worthy of God, and made his Sufferings, tho' of another kind, a sit equivalent for that more grievous Punishment, which we deserved. The Sentence of the Law was *Death*: and to that he readily submitted. But the nature of his Office required, he should break the chains of Death; and having satisfied the end of the Law, should be restored to Life and Immortality.

And let no one from hence take occasion to complain, that obedience is still required under the same Penalty; and that notwith-standing Christ has paid this ransom for us, we are still obnoxious to the same Sentence of Damnation. Let no one say, that Punishment is twice exacted; and that after Christ has suffered once for Sin, 'tis hard the sinner should be made to suffer too. For as the

Efficacy

Efficacy of vicarious Punishments depends SERM. on the good will and acceptance of the Law- XII. giver; and they cannot, but by his allowance, expiate another's guilt; fo 'tis manifest from hence, he may choose, whether he will accept them absolutely as full Satisfactions, or require some farther Condition of the criminal himself; without observing which, he shall reap no Benefit from this Atonement. This, if we regard only his authority, is plainly matter of his choice and option: But if we take into the account, his effential Wisdom, Holiness and Justice; it will appear necessary, God should still require of us, Faith and Obedience; and extend the Benefits of this Redemption to fuch only, as labour and aspire after them; leaving the rest to that miserable estate, from which they refuse to be rescued on such easy Terms.

Thus likewise, we see, how the Gospel Privileges of pardon and salvation, altho' sometimes said to be purchased by the Blood of Christ, are yet, at other times, mentioned as the effects of God's free Grace and Mercy; not only as being, on our part, undeserved, and therefore free to us; but likewise, as it is an act of Mercy to accept a Sponsor in our room; and allow the Sufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to satisfy, or make compensation, for those we had deserved: especially considering That Sponsor too, was of his own procuring, not any one we could

have

SERM. have found out, or engaged for our felves; XII. but the eternal Son of God himself affuming I human flesh, freely given by his Father, and freely giving up himself a Ransom for all: for God fo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosever believeth in bim, should not perish, but have everlasting life. And therefore whatever some late Pretenders to Reason may object, the Apostle (we find, who was a better judge of Christianity than they) could fee no inconfistency between God's pardoning freely, and Christ's paying a Price for our Redemption: but joins them both together, as fairly confistent and amicable Propositions. Being justified, says he, freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. The very providing That Redemption was an act of Grace; and we ought furely to receive it, as a mark of the highest Favour; that when we had abused our liberty, and fallen from original Righteoufness, God spared not bis own son; but delivered bim up for us all, to rescue us from that Misery, which we had pulled upon our felves.

With what humble Confidence should this inspire us, that he will not be wanting in his future Favours, but together with him, the Son of his love, will freely give us all things? And how withal should it instruct us, to make him all possible returns of Gratitude, to render him not only the tribute of our lips,

lips, but the obedience of our lives; "by giv-SERM. "ing up our felves to his fervice, and by XII. " walking before him in holiness and righ-" teousness all the days of our lives?" For what grateful acknowledgments can be too great, what expressions of Duty can be too tiresom and difficult, to testify our sense of his amazing Bounty, who has graciously refcued us from fuch Destruction? How much less should we be suffered to decline his Service; when the Terms, which he requires, are most rational and delightful in themselves. not any thing impossible to human nature, (That had been to banter and make sport with our Infirmity!) nor any thing useless and unprofitable in it self (That had been an Act of meer Sovereignty, not of Goodness!) but fuch as may ferve to improve and meliorate our nature; nay fuch (I must add lastly) as are necessary to prepare and qualify us for those Joys, with which they shall at last be eternally rewarded. For which reason it was wifely ordained by God, that they only should reap the Benefits of this Salvation by Christ, who were careful to obey his commands; fince no others in reality can be qualified to tafte it, without fuch violence offered to their nature, as is inconfistent with the condition of rational and free Agents.

From hence then in conclusion, we may observe the opposite mistakes of two sorts of people, (1.) of those Sectaries who so unrea-

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SERM. fonably decry good Works, as to judge them XII. no way necessary in the matter of Salvation; for that Christ (they think) hath done all for his Elect, and requires no duty or obedience from them; whereas Christ's Merit (we have feen) is not absolute, but conditional, in the application; and is proposed to us, only upon condition of our Faith and Repentance, and fincere Obedience. (2.) Of them likewise, on the other hand, who preach up the merit of good Works, and that too fo far, as to make amends for the failures and deficiencies of others; which plainly derogates from the ample Merits of our Saviour's Death, and represents men of extraordinary Piety, as in fome degree, at least, the Authors of their own and other men's Salvation. The middle way, in this case, will be the only safe standard of our Faith, and measure of our Conduct. The Gospel proposes no Happiness, but to such as give all diligence to make their calling and election fure, and with fear and trembling to work out their falvation. And This it proposes, not as the effect of their own merit or fufficiency, but as purchased for them by their dear Redeemer; who died to fave them from their Sins, and from the Punishment due to them; who by his Sufferings has fatisfied for the guilt of their Offences, and by the Merit of his perfect Obedience, has procured them the Reward of Immortality; and will not fail to apply the Benefits

of

of this Merit and Satisfaction to all fuch wor- SERM. thy disciples, by his prevailing intercession XII. for them, as their great High Priest, and at last, by openly acquitting and receiving them to Glory, as their Judge and King.

To him with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour, &c.

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7 D.L. H. 35, 34, .

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SERMON XIII.

The Certainty of Christ's Refurrection. A TELL BLOCK

R O M. vii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is rifen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

T my first entring upon this Subject, SERM. I proposed these Two things, as general Heads or Topicks of Discourse; namely,

> I. To infift in general upon the nature and conditions of that Salvation, which the Gospel proposes; that Justification of the Elect, which gives them confidence before God, and fecures them from the danger of any Condemnation. And then

> II. To explain more particularly, the method of our Redemption by Christ's Death and Refurrection and Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the

the Presence of the Father, and make conti-SERM. nual Intercession for us. XIII.

The First Head having been finished, in a former Discourse; in my next I began upon the Second: The First Particular under which, viz. the Death of Christ, was all that the Solemnity of that Season would permit me to dispatch. But now a more joyful Occasion calls us to the consideration of the

- 2. Second Particular, observable in the method of our Redemption, viz. our Saviour's RESURRECTION. It is Christ that died, year rather that is RISEN AGAIN. In treating whereupon, that I may at once answer the great Occasion of this Festival, and likewise the Design of the Apostle, in this place, I would endeayour
- (1.) To confirm the certainty of the Fact, that Christ did actually arise from the dead. Then

(2.) To argue the necessity of it. And

(3.) To urge more particularly the benefits, which we receive by this our Saviour's Refurrection. The

(1.) First of these Particulars will take up the remainder of the time, allotted for the present Discourse; in which I purpose to confirm and prove the certainty of the Fact, that Christ did actually arise from the dead. Which, as it is an essential Article or Doctrine of our most holy Faith, and the main foundation Vol. II.

SERM. of our Hopes of Happiness, will deserve to XIII. be very seriously attended to; and guarded, against those cavils with which unreasonable

men have fet themselves against it.

In the nature of the thing, as well as by the Types and Predictions of the ancient Scriptures, it was necessary that Christ should break the chains of death; and not himself continue in that dark captivity, which it was one principal intention of his coming to lead captive and abolish. And therefore since our Fesus had, by his Miracles, approved himself to be that Christ, who was promised as the Saviour of Mankind; it ought not to feem incredible, it ought indeed to be believed with full Assurance, that all the ancient Prophecies concerning the Messiah were punctually accomplished in him. But I would rather choose to insist upon such arguments, as conclude directly for the Fact, than fuch as prove it but by way of Inference.

And here, if Facts are to be proved by Testimony, or the report of credible and authentick Witnesses, (which has ever been esteemed the proper proof in matters of this nature) we have the concurrent evidence of great numbers of people, of men and women, of Apostles and followers, to convince us of the truth of this momentous Doctrine. For our blessed Lord and Master had too tender a regard for them he died to redeem, to leave them doubtful or uncertain, and without wit-

ness,

ness, in a matter of such mighty consequence. SERM. He did not therefore, as foon as he had with- XIII. drawn from the sepulchre, retire out of sight, and enthrone himself immediately in Heaven: but shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being feen for forty days together. In that time, he took feveral occafions of discovering and manifesting himself to fuch persons, as he thought proper to employ, as the witnesses of his Resurrection: And if we can stand out against the testimony they deliver, it must be upon one of the two following accounts: either because we sufpect they were deluded and imposed upon themselves; or else, because we suspect them of a defign to impose on and deceive others.

Now if they were deluded and imposed upon themselves, This must be owing either to the strength of their imagination, and some powerful prepossessions of Enthusiam; or else to the crast of some designing knave or evil spirit, who took upon him to personate their deceased Master, and so make them believe him to be risen from the dead.

But both these are apparently absurd and monstrous suppositions. For which way, in the first place, can we imagine, those very men should on a sudden grow so sanguine in this opinion of their Master's Resurrection, who but very lately had all forsaken him and sled; who understood not the Scriptures, that he must arise from the dead; but were so R 2 strangely

SER M. Strangely terrified and astonished at his death, XIII. that they began to be in doubt, and fuspect they had been mistaken, when they trusted it had been be which should have redeemed Ifrael? 'Tis manifest they had prepossessions of another kind. They expected he should erect a visible, external kingdom, and were so flushed with the prospect of preferment in it, that his most Divine Discourses, concerning the necessity of his departure, sufficed not to correct their mistake; nor take off those fond conceits they entertained, those expectations they upheld of his continuing among them. For this reason, when he died, they were like men affrighted, and had so little thought of his rifing from the dead, that they would not credit the testimony of each other in the matter, but required the evidence and conviction of their own fenses. This seems but a very unlikely preparation for fuch strange enthusiasm to poffess them all, as might make them confident and fure their Master was alive, whose death they were afraid had frustrated their former hopes.

But for once, let us imagine them so sickle and inconstant, that it might be possible for their whole number, from the lowest despair, to rise to the highest and most extravagant conceits. Yet was the manner of his appearance such, as may be fairly imputed to a vain imagination? Had they but a transient view of him? Did he only slide gently by them

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and depart? This, melancholy men might SERM. fancy, or enthusiastical might feign. But XIII. they had the clearest demonstration could be asked or given. They discoursed with him, they eat, they drank, they faw, they handled; they did every thing that was necessary to render their witness unexceptionable. Thus St. Peter justly reckons it a clear argument of the certainty of the fact, that they did eat and drink with bim after he arose from the dead *. And accordingly St. John, we declare, that which we have heard, which we have feen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life +. Nay, and we know there was one doubting Apostle, who not only refused to credit the testimony of the rest; but would not promise to believe his own eye fight, if Jesus should appear to him; unless he might moreover fearch the wounds he had received upon the crofs, and so have the fullest conviction, that could possibly be given him, that his Lord was rifen.

All this plainly tended to the more confirmation of the Faith. For hereby the Apostles at once took off all suspicion of their being deceived by any airy Phantom, or by vain conceits of their own; and likewise guarded against the possibility of being imposed upon by any other person. For admit it had been possible for some skilful Mimick to have per-

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* Act x. 41. † i John i. 1, 3.

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SERM. fonated their deceased Master; Admit such XIII. a one could so perfectly have imitated both his mien and speech, that they who had enjoyed a most intimate acquaintance with him, and had not the least expectation of seeing him again, should not however be able to perceive the difference, and discover the Imposture; Admit lastly, such a one as this, tho' none of the constant followers of our Lord, to have been notwithstanding so perfectly acquainted with his Doctrines and defigns, as to drop no inconfistency in all his Discourses to betray the fallacy: Admit all this, I fay, unreasonable as it is; yet could he counterfeit those wounds, which the spear and nails had made? Could his hands and feet, tho' pierced, be fit for use, and free from pain? Could his fide be open, and yet he at ease? or had he an art to live, when his vitals had been stabled? Away with such monstrous and unheard of inconfistencies! It must be Fefus himself, if the Apostles may be credited; for it is not possible they should have been deceived themselves. All riais plaising tend

And yet why, on the other hand, should we suspect them of a design or combination to deceive us? Why should we believe they talk of what they never saw, and relate such wonders as did not really occur? They were persons by their education little qualified for the forming or carrying on of such a Design; and there was a jealous eye kept over them to

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detect any project they might have ventured SERM. to contrive. And over and above all this, XIII. (which sufficiently argues such a cheat impracticable) they have given the greatest proof, that can be asked, of their fincerity. have been so impartial in their account, as not to conceal the failings of their own members; and fo couragiously have they defended the account thus given, that after many hardships endured, at last they sealed it with their blood; and chose rather to part with their lives, than depart from their Profession. And he, who can suppose a man to go so far as this, for the fake of what he knows to be falle; must first of all suppose him not the wickedest only, but the most foolish too of all men living. And tho' this might perhaps have held in one or two particulars, yet that the whole number should be of the same mind, and not fo much as one of them perfuaded to recant; This is wholly unaccountable, if the matter had been false; and can be imputed to nothing else but their firm conviction of the truth of it. Nay, and which is more than all, these very persons were enabled to confirm their Testimony by the gift of Miracles, not by one or two Performances, that might feem unufual; but by a great variety of Wonders: and those not of fuch a kind, as might with any colour be imputed to fleight of hand, or fecret artifice; but wrought in the most publick unexceptionable R 4 manner.

SERM. manner, and with fuch stupendous Circum-XIII. stances, as must extort from every rational fpectator an undoubted acknowledgment of the finger of God. Tho' persons illiterate and unlearned, yet we find they spake in divers languages, and with fuch Wisdom and Eloquence, as all their Adversaries were not able to gainfay or refilt. Tho' persons of no worldly grandeur or authority, yet we fee how in an instant they could heal those inveterate diseases, for which no riches or greatness of this world could procure any remedy. Such were the Witnesses of our Saviour's Refurrection.

But it will be asked, perhaps, why he should appear only to his own Disciples and followers; why he did not rather shew himself to the Sanbedrin, or to the people of the Yews, that so he might effectually remove all scruples or objections; and leaving them no room to doubt of his Refurrection, might thereby convince them of the truth of his Doctrine; and lead them to embrace that Faith they had fo wickedly opposed? Why did he not, it may be asked, go shew himself to Herod. who had so impiously insulted and derided him, and let the petty Ruler of Galilee behold how that King of the Jews, whom he had lately treated with fuch fcorn and contempt, was now declared to be the son of God with power, THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS? Why did he not appear in the pre-

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presence of Pontius Pilate, the unjust judge, SERM. that had condemned him, tho' conscious of his XIII. innocence, and yielded him up to the rage and envy of the Jews? To have convinced These of their iniquity, and brought them to acknowledge their crime: This it may be thought would have gained the greatest credit to his Cause, and filled his enemies with shame and confusion.

But fure there can be little reason to suppose, that They, who had already hardened themselves against so many wonderful methods of Conviction, should now at last be persuaded, by his rising from the dead. In all these there was a root of bitterness, an evil heart of unbelief; such attachment to sensual things, as made them most averse to the proposal of his spiritual religion. The Roman Governor, who was capable of being influenced to that unrighteous sentence; can we believe that any motive could ever have fufficed for his Conviction and Recovery? That Herod, who but a few years fince had murdered Christ's Forerunner; and but few days fince had fo disengenuously ridiculed himself; can it be supposed that he had any room for remorfe, or was capable of being reformed by any Miracle whatever? And as for the people of the Jews, who had been so clamorous to procure his crucifixion, who had studied to stifle the Fame, or hinder the belief of his former Miracles, to put That Lazarus to death SERM. death, whose resurrection ere this, was an XIII. undeniable evidence of his Divine Power, and therefore an invincible proof of the Doctrine he delivered; can it be expected that they, whose behaviour was so obstinate and disingenuous, should hearken to any farther arguments, that could be used with them; and not rather deny the facts they plainly heard or saw, and find means to evade the

Conviction of their own fenses?

It is God's usual method to refift the proud, and give his grace to the bumble. The meek shall be guide in judgment, and fuch as are gentle; them shall be learn his way. If any man do earnestly and unfeignedly endeavour to do the will of God, and discharge the Duties of that station, in which God has placed him: it is he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God. For the comfort then, and fatisfaction of fuch humble minds, as well as for their farther direction and encouragement; our bleffed Lord was pleafed to shew himself to fuch, as had already discovered their inclination to obey him: whilft the obstinate despifers of his Gospel were excluded from that favour; tho' not left without fufficient means of Conviction, had they but in any fuitable measure attended to them.

Had it been enough to assure them of his Resurrection, they wanted not ample testimony of it; and if they were not the favourite persons, to whom he chose to shew himfelf alive (which fure they had little reason SERM. to expect) they had however the concurrent XIII. fuffrage of many unexceptionable witnesses; men who cannot rationally be suspected to have been deluded or imposed upon themfelves, nor to have concurred in a defign to deceive or impose on the credulity of others. Men who confirmed their testimony by their mighty Works, God also bearing them witness, both with figns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoft, according to his own will*. The unbelieving Yews had already stood out against abundant methods of Conviction. And the evidence now added to it, was fuch as might be fitly preached among the Gentiles; when these chosen Witnesses should be sent out among all nations, and disperse the Gospel thro' the dark corners of the earth.

And if this was enough to filence the objections of that perverse generation; so that they had no reason to expect that farther Conviction of their own senses, which they had shewn themselves able to withstand in other instances: much less surely should we complain, who have the same Evidence; or urge our want of farther Proof, to excuse our Installed, when we have That already, which is abundantly sufficient. It would be most unreasonable to expect ocular Demonstration of such Facts as were transacted many ages

the bed year . Heb. ii. 4:

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Shrm. fince, and necessary to be done but once. It XIII. is enough, that matters of this kind be attested in a manner not liable to just exception. Posterity must give credit to the witness of their forefathers: and tho we have seen, there were good reasons, why the unbelieving Yews should

good reasons, why the unbelieving Jews should not be made the witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection; yet if those reasons were less evident, it is no just ground of doubt, to say, that matters are not proved in the manner we would have them, provided it be done in a manner capable of proving them. Let us thankfully make use of the Light, which

we enjoy, and not previously repine for want of more; when we have enough to guide us

right already, if we but attend to it.

But why should I insist so much upon the testimony of his Friends; when the same appears from the confession of his very enemies. The band of Soldiers, fet to guard the sepulchre, like men affrighted ran into the city, and told what they had feen. So that that care, which was taken to fecure the body, and prevent the possibility of any imposture, does but supply us with another set of Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection. And tho' they were foon induced, by mercenary views, to change their narrative; yet both they and the Fews were of necessity obliged to own thus much at least, that they had the Body no longer in their keeping. Could That have been produced, they had eafily filenced mini

filenced all the Apostles; and no rational man SERM. would have believed their testimony, that XIII. their Master was alive again, if he had seen and known his body to be dead. How must such a consutation have hindered the imposture from spreading any farther; and even put the Authors out of countenance themselves? But when, instead of this, the body was confessedly removed, notwithstanding the great care and caution they had used to keep it, this could not but give great colour to the report of his Resurrection; too great to be wiped off by the feeble efforts of their

groundless suggestions.

For what account, after all, could they give of this absence of the body? Why they found out at last this pitiful evasion, that the disciples had come and stolen it away, while the Soldiers were asleep. A pretence as weak as it is malicious, and which carries its own confutation along with it! A fure Argument of their judicial blindness and infatnation, to frame a story so inconfishent that it destroys itself! For besides the moral impossibility of the whole band of foldiers falling all fo found afleep at once, that the stone should be rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body carried off without disturbing or awakening any one of them; especially considering the strict discipline observed among the Romans, which must make such negligence highly criminal, and therefore dangerous: Besides again, that XIII. that it could not rationally be suspected to have been done in such hurry as the Projectors of so bold an enterprise must needs have used: Besides, that the enterprise itself was highly improbable, that the disciples, so timorous and dispirited as they were, should venture to break thro' an armed band of soldiers, and risque all that might be suffered from the power of the Romans, or the malice of the Jews: Besides This, I say, they do hereby manifestly invalidate their own tes-

timony.

For men, who confess themselves to have been all afleep, can be but incompetent witneffes of what was done: and they must have a new knack of perception, who can attest what was transacted, when themselves were in a state of meer insensibility. Upon this supposition therefore, the disciples indeed might, or any body elfe, for ought they knew, steal the body away. But then it might as well be raised by a Divine Power, and their testimony, who knew nothing of the matter, will ferve as much to prove the one as the other. Had they been really afleep, they ought to have confessed their ignorance, and not pretended to give account of a fact, which they affert themselves incapable of observing, and which, could they have observed it, they would doubtless have exerted their utmost strength and vigor to prevent. Their having recourse

recourse to such a forry shift as this, is it self SERM. no small confirmation of the truth I have been XIII. aiming to prove, that Christ is risen from the dead. For whilst they confessed his body to be no longer in the grave, tho' they had taken fuch great care and caution to fecure it, and could yet account no better for the loss of it, than by this story, which sufficiently confutes it felf, and must needs fink under the weight of its own absurdity; they did hereby but ftrengthen the Cause, which they so feebly opposed, and could gain credit with none but fuch, as were beforehand disposed to be deceived, and willing to believe with them, whether right or wrong.

Thus far we have proceeded, in examining the Evidence or proof given of the Fact; and upona furvey of the whole matter, we fee abundant reason to conclude for the Certainty and undoubted truth of it, that Christ did actually

erife from the dead.

SUMMERS

The next thing in order to be done, upon this Subject, is to urge the Necessity of it, and fhew upon what accounts it was indispensably requifite, that Christ should thus arise from the dead. But this I shall reserve to another opportunity. Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.

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SERMON XIV.

The Necessity and Benefits of Christ's Refurrection.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

THEN I appeared last in this place, SERM. as well the order of my Text, as the XIV. great occasion of the Festival we then celebrated, led me to discourse to you from that clause of the words now read, which concerns our Saviour's Resurection, year ather that is risen again. In treating whereupon, that I might at once answer the defign of the Festival, and that of the Apostle in this place, I proposed (1.) to examine and sum up the Evidence of the Fact, in order to confirm or prove its Certainty, that Christ did actually arise from the dead. Then (2.) to argue the Necessity of it, and shew upon what accounts it was indispensably requisite he should thus arise.

the Benefits, which we receive by this our XIV. Saviour's Resurrection. The First of these was all I went thro' at that time:—I proceed

now, in order to the

(2.) Second thing proposed, upon this Argument, namely, to urge the Necessity hereof, and shew, upon what account it was indifpensably requisite, that Christ should thus arise from the dead. And fuch indeed was the Necessity, that St. Peter tells us, it could not possibly be otherwise, for God bath raised him up, having loofed the pains of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Whence this impossibility should arise, perhaps may not appear to every Reader, at the first fight. But if we confider the matter a little more attentively, we shall perceive there was a twofold Necessity of our Saviour's Resurrection; the first intrinsical, or that which was founded in the nature of the thing; (and this concerns our Saviour's Power, and the Weak+ ness of his Enemies); the other extrinsecal, or that which was founded in something else; and this takes in the Divine Decree, and the End or defign of the Messiah's Office.

[1.] First then, I begin with that which is intrinsical, or that Necessity, which is founded in the nature of the thing; and concerns our Saviour's Power, and the Weakness of his Enemies: He too strong to be detained, and They too impotent to hold. That he sub-Nol. II.

SERM. mitted to death was no effect of necessity. XIV. but choice. For, as he has expresly affured us, no man could take away bis life from him; but he laid it down of bimfelf. He could immediately have fummoned more than twelve legions of Angels to his rescue; or by a single word of his Divine Power, he could have frustrated all the plots and machinations of his Enemies, and turned them to their own confusion. For, being in his pature Divine as well as buman, (that eternal Word, by which the heavens and the earth were made at the beginning,) he had all things subject to the authority of his command, and liable to be controuled by his supreme Will: he was far above the power of those Creatures he had made himself; and was no otherwise to be annoyed by them, but as he freely submitted to them in the form of man.

From these same Arguments, which prove it to have been owing to his own consent that Death had any power over him at all; it likewise follows, that it must needs be in his power to restrain its dominion, and submit no farther than he pleased himself. Therefore he adds, that be had power to lay down his hife, and he had power likewise to take it up again. And yet more peremptorily did he tell the Yews, if they destroyed the temple of his body, that in three days he would vaise it up. He promises it, we see, in his own same, as the effect of his own Power and Authority. Other

ther men are raised by a Power by no means SERM. their own; they are restored to life at the XIV. command of that Almighty Father, who first gave them Being; and were it not for the intervention of his reliftless Word, they must continue for ever in a state of death. But He, whow as God as well as man, (by a myfterious union of an infinite and finite nature in had infinite Ability fame Person,) and Power in himself: He being, as touching his Godhead, of one substance with the Father, could do all things by the word of his power; and therefore could not longer be detained in a state of death, than he freely chose and consented to submit to it.

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And left we should suppose, he could confent to a final and unalterable submission; let us attend a little to confider, how inconfistent and abfurd it is to imagine he could, by any means, fuffer that body to putrify and perish, or that foul and body to be finally separated, which were thus personally united to his Divine Nature; how unjust indeed, that he should for ever undergo the Punishment of Sin, who had already made ample Satisfaction for it; nay how improper (I may add) and destructive of the Scheme of our Redemption, that his body should be longer detained in the grave, who had already answered the End of his appearance here; and was thenceforth to appear in the presence of God for us. But this last Consideration belongs rather to that

SERM. that other kind of Necessity, I mentioned, of XIV. our Saviour's Resurrection, namely,

[2.] Secondly, that which was extrinsecal, or founded in something else; and This takes in the Divine Decree; and the End or design

of the Meshab's Office.

The Divine Decree appears fufficiently, from that remarkable Prediction of the Royal Prophet; Thou wilt not leave my foul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy boly one to see corruption. For as David was a Type of Christ; we find 'tis usual for him to speak such things, in the first person, as do necessarily belong to the Meshab; and that too, even when the more immediate occasion of his Ecstasy was fomé Providential Dispensation towards himfelf. The reason whereof is evidently This: because whilst under such circumstances, he confidered himself not strictly in his personal capacity, but under the notion of a Type; from the contemplation of what he had thus ultimately in view, and the special direction of the Holy Ghoft, he was many times led to draw fuch characters, as do properly agree to the Antitype alone.

The Jews, 'tis likely, might have some warrantable and authentick Traditions; they might have stated Commentaries or Expositions received among them, to fix and determine the meaning of such Prophecies. From whence we find such application easily and often made of them in the new Testament.

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And tho' we may not have all those helps SERM. remaining, which the Jews had, to interpret XIV. and explain the sense of Scripture; yet we certainly have others, which they had not: and it is a consideration, which deserves to have some weight with us, that it was so understood, whilst those Helps remained. And no doubt it is at least a very good rule, for judging such characters to belong to the Messiah; if they could not possibly agree to the

Speaker (David) in his own person.

Such then is that Prediction, which I just now mentioned. For to use St. Peter's argument on this occasion. Men and brethren. let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and bis sepulchre is with us unto this day: (characters which do but ill accord with the aforefaid Prophecy, if David were himself the person there intended! for how should he so many ages continue in the grave and state of death, who was not to be left in hell, nor his flesh to see corruption?) Therefore being a Prophet, (as the Apostle goes on) and knowing that God had fworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of bis loins, according to the flesh, be would raise up Christ, to sit on his throne: He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his foul was not left in bell, neither his flesh did see corruption *. In like manner let us hear St. Paul, For David,

* Acts ii. 29, 30, 31,

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SERM. fays he, after he had served his own genera-XIV. tion by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption*. From all this 'tis obvious to collect the meaning of that samous Prophecy, which, since it could not possibly belong to David in his own person, must of necessity be referred to the Messah.

What was thus not obscurely revealed before, our blessed Saviour afterwards more fully confirmed, and more explicitly fore-told. From henceforth therefore his Resurrection became necessary, as necessary as it is God should not lie; but that all his promises should be yea and amen, stedfast and sure,

and inviolably kept.

Nor was this Decree meerly arbitrary (tho' that might suffice to satisfy and silence us) but it had indeed it's foundation in the nature of the thing; since the very Design of the Messah's Office required his Resurrection. He came to conquer and subdue those enemies, by which Mankind was most unhappily enslaved. But which way could this End have been accomplished; if he, who came to conquer, had been subdued by death? or how should he have rescued others, if thus unable to release himself? Again, he was not only to make satisfaction for our sins by the Sacrifice of himself upon the cross; but

* Acts. xiii. 36, 37.

likewise

likewife to plead the virtue and merit of that SERM Sacrifice by the following oblation or pre- XIV. fentation of himself in heaven: (typified of old by the sprinkling of the victims blood under the law:) in the continuance of which oblation confifts his most powerful and prevalling Intercession with the Father for us. Lastly, he was likewise to be invested with the Regal Authority, to govern and bestow spiritual gifts upon his Church; to punish the contempt and transgression of his Laws; and to appoint some proper Substitutes as his Vibegerents, to rule as well as to instruct. But before he could receive or exercise this Power from on high, 'twas necessary that he should arise from the dead, and not remain, as to his body, (which is one effential part of his Manhood) in a state of meer insensibility. All which will receive a farther illustration by our attending to the

this Argument, viz. the particular Benefits which we receive by our Saviour's Refurrection. St. Paul; you fee in the Text, sums them up in This, viz. the Freedom of the Elect from Condemnation: Who is be that condemnated? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is rifen again. Now to shew you, how his Resurrection, as well as Death, was necessary to free the Elect from Condemnation; (and indeed does it effectually;) how the Advantage purchased by his Death and Passion had S 4

SERM, been frustrated and lost, and could never have XIV. been conferred on us without his rising from the dead; how our hopes of life had been but weakly founded, if our Redeemer himself had continued still in death and silence: In order to set all this in a clear light, it will be proper to make these three following reslections, viz:

[1.] That our Saviour's rising from the dead was necessary, in order to his Ascension into heaven, there to appear in the presence

of God for us, and make a correct made de les

[2.] That Thisagain was necessary, in order to his conferring those Gifts and Graces on his Church, which may enable us to work out our Salvation. And

[3.] That hereby we are encouraged with the lively hopes of Happiness; thro' that affurance, which all this derives to us of our Justification and Redemption; and so are freed from the Condemnation of our own Consciences. And

[1.] First then, the first great and beneficial Consequence of our Saviour's Resurrection, and to which That was absolutely necessary, is his Ascension into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. For I omit to mention the forty days of his continuing upon earth, and conversing with his Disciples; as being rather designed for their consolation and support, and for the clearer proof of his Resurrection, than being it self

any

any beneficial consequence of it to the Church SERM. in general. But what is the mighty advan—XIV. tage of his Ascension into heaven, They will easily perceive, who have any due notion of the previous Satisfaction and Merit of his death.

For that Propitiation, which he once made upon the cross, he now continually in heaven represents before the Father, and applies to our great Use and Benefit: in like mannner as of old, in the legal Expiations, it was not enough, that the victim had been flain; unless, its life were fymbolically presented before God by the sprinkling of the blood. All this I may shortly, perhaps, have some occasion more fully to illustrate and explain to you. In the mean time it may suffice to observe, that this very beneficial Consequence of our Saviour's Refurrection, is at once an illustrious instance of what I undertook to explain at present. viz. the Benefits, which we receive thereby; and likewise a clear proof of the Apostle's argument in this place, that fince Christ is risen from the dead, the Elect must be free. from Condemnation: to which purpose, we find, he carries it farther in the next words, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. For had he not risen from the dead, he could not have afcended up on bigh, to plead the Satisfaction and Merit of his Sufferings, to release them from the Guilt and Punishment of their Offences,

SERM. Tences; and confirmatheir title to eternal XIV. Happinels, and confirmatheir title to eternal XIV. Happinels, and therefore fince his Refure received was thus needs flary, in order to this African floridate the added to this African floridate the added to the

21/2. 10 Standly that to This we owe those Gifts and Graces he from time to time be-Rowe upon his Church. For the he is faid to have been borna King; and by confequence tellage had a right withis Regal Authority, Willithe was convertant upon earth; yer fince 'Ascertain' he appeared here rather in the form of a ferwant, and did not display bimilelfin the grandeur of a Sovereigh, for this reason ir has been usual to speak of his entrance on the Regal Office as confequential to his Rel Prestion. There is he faid to have received and power in between and in earth, no have been bighty exalted and had a name given Himp which is above every name. And then indeed, he manifested forth his glory, ih a manner, which became his Royal Character. He elevited (as the Apolle thews in the next words) to the right hand of God; He had then the Preeminence and Dominion over all creatares, He fent forth his Holy Choft on the Apolites, appointed them his Deputies of Substitutes on earth, by the ministry of them and their fliceeffors he governo and directs hie Church and will finally, in the confirm matien of ages, difference Rewards or Punishments to every man, uccording as his work shall be. In the accomplishment of these purposes tences prinof his Regal Office, which he exerted nor in XIV.
this ample manner, till after his Refurrection;
when God is fald to have fet his King upon

Bis boly bill of Ston!

Now, how the exercise of these Powers tends to free the Elect from Condemnation. by furnishing them with means and opportunities of working out their own Satuation. and at last actually absolving them, is very evident. For those means of Grace, which are afforded us, were designed to to direct our Faith, and to influence our Practice, that we that be recovered out of the frare of the Devil, and possessed of the Conditions requifite to entitle us to that Satisfaction and Merit of Chrift, which was designed to rescue us from Death and Condemnation, and reftore us to a happy Immortality. And yer the Necessity of all this being entirely frustrated and defeated, if the great Captain of our Salvation had lain ftill in the grave, and continued under the Dominion of Death, which had utterly prevented the exercise of his Regal Office, nay and the continuance of his Prieftly Office too, whereby he obtains from God, what by the Regat he bestows on men; I fay, this Confideration is a plain argument, why we should account these Gifts and Graces among the Benefits of our Saviour's Refurrection, and demand with the Apoftle; Who is he that condemneth, when 'the Christ that

SERM that died, yea rather that is rifen again. I

XIV. have only to add now

[3.] Thirdly, in the last place, that hereby we are encouraged with the lively Hopes of Happiness thro' that affurance, which all this derives to us of our Justification and Redemption; and so are freed from the Condemnation of our own Consciences. Was Christ raised from the dead? This is a clear confirmation of the whole Christian Doctrine; inafmuch as it implies the Divine Power of our Lord, and the concurrence of the Father with him; and how then should we dispute either his Doctrine or Mission, which were both attested by Divine Authority? Besides he had given it for a Sign to his incredulous countrymen, that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be no more than three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And therefore, when this stupendous Sign was accordingly fulfilled, they could not help concluding (if they would act rationally) that his Doctrine was true, and God had fet his feal to it. It was the apprehension the Jews had of this consequence, which made them so exceeding cautious to guard against any imposture of this kind. Had they thought it a thing indifferent; they might have left the event to Chance, or to the management of others; they need not have been folicitous to prevent the people's being imposed upon about

about it. But they judged it a matter of the SERM. utmost consequence, and which, if suffered XIV. to obtain among the people, could not fail to establish and gain credit to the Doctrine of Christ. And therefore they took care to make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and

fetting a watch.

Again, this Resurrection of Christ tends farther to beget in us a lively Hope of Salvation; by acquainting us with the Acceptance and Efficacy of that Sacrifice he offered on the Cross; which cannot fail to comfort us with the affurance of a full and perfect Expiation. For was Christ's death intended as a Sacrifice for Sin? And yet fince that Oblation, has God raifed him from the dead? From hence we learn, that he has conquered death, and him that has the power of death, i. e. the Devil; We learn, that the ranfom he paid is accepted of the Father, who after he had humbled him a little, and made him lower than the Angels, has thus crowned him with glory and bonour; and given him a name which is above every name. aidi la banuak

Lastly, it is moreover a convincing argument of his Intercession, his powerful and prevailing Intercession with the Father for us. For Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death bath no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God, and is now ascended into heaven, there to appear in the

SERM. presence of God for us. And what mighty Comfort then should we take in this reflection, that our Redeemer liveth; that be ever liveth to make intercession for us; that he, whom the Father always heareth, is engaged in our behalf; that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who, whilst we are employed in his service upon Earth, is pleading continually our cause in Heaven? How should it fill us with all joy and peace in believing, and make us abound in hope, thro' the power of the Holy Ghoft? And All this now being consequential to his Resurrection; we fee with what great reason St. Peter has afferted, that God of his abundant Mercy has begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead : fince without That, our Hope must have been faint and wavering, or rather, groundless and abfurd; we should have had less certainty of the revival of our own bodies, and none at all of their being raifed to glory; whilf he, who undertook to procure us this Reward of Immortality, should himself have been detained in death and filence.

But now, fince that the Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to many; since by his Resurrection, he is become the first fruits of them that slept; let us draw near with full assurance of Faith, not doubting, but that be, who raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal bodies by his spirit, that dwelleth in us;

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and make us fit together in heavenly places in SERM. Christ Jesus, if we be but careful to conform XIV. ourselves at present to our Lord's Example by a spiritual Resurrection; if like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also die unto our past sins, and from henceforth walk in newness of life. Bleffed and boly is he that bath part in this first refurrection; on such the second death bath no power: but they shall be finally admitted to those rivers of Pleasure, which are an God's right hand, and last for evermore; they shall be received into these mantions of eternal Blifs, which Christ is gone before to prepare for them in his Father's Kingdom, which he purchased for them at the Price of his Blood, the extensive Merit whereof he continually fets forth, at the right hand of God. And this hould lead me, in order, to the Third thing observable in the Method of our Redemption, viz. Christ's Explication at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, to plead our cause and intercede in our behalf; subo is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. But this must be referred for the subject of our future Meditations. Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, benceforth for evermore. Amen, band adain cate in the prefence of the Father, and water

for each interrespon for us. And in That

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SERMON XV.

CHRIST's Exaltation at the right hand of God.

R O M. viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

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HE SECOND of the Two general XV.

Heads, at first proposed, was to explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption, by Christ's Death and Resurrection, and Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, and make continual Intercession for us.—I have already gone through the Two first Particulars under this Head, viz. Christ's Death and Resurrection, and proceed next, in order to the

3. Third, namely, his Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, and make for ever intercession for us. And in That there

there are plainly these Two things considera-SERM. ble, viz. XV.

ble, viz.

1. Christ's Exaltation it felf, at the right

Hand of God. And,

2. The Intercession he there makes for

right Hand of God. Where it will be proper to reflect,

[1.] Upon the Person said thus to be exalted.

[2.] Upon the Place, to which he is exalted.

[3.] Upon the Privileges implied in this his Exaltation. And,

[4.] Upon the Posture, in which he is re-

prefented.

[1.] First, Upon the Person said to be exalted, viz. our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, referred to in the Text under the relative, Who.

It had been long before predicted of him, in the Book of Psalms. The Lord said unto my Lord, (says David) Sit thou at my right hand. Which words, however the modern sews would wrest them to Abraham, or David, or any body indeed, rather than him, to whom they really belong, were yet, by their foresathers, more candidly interpreted, and believed, upon convincing reasons, to refer to the Messiah. He, whom David in spirit called his Lord, must not only be some person

* Pfal. cx./r.

distinct from him, but even superior to him,

SERM in a spiritual sense. And he, who was at once XV. possessed of Regal Authority, and invested with eternal Priesthood, (both which we shall hereafter perceive to be implied in this Exaltation) could be neither Abrabam, nor David, nor any of the worthies of the old Testament, or the succeeding times to Christ, in whom those Offices were rarely joined, and, when

they were, expired with their lives.

For which reason, when our Saviour urged this Text upon the Pharifees, to prove the Dignity of the Messiah; they had no thought of evading his argument, by denying any fuch meaning of the Text; but were so compleatly filenced, that not a man of them, from that day forth; durft ask him any more questions*. From hence the writers of the new Testament took this sense of the Prophecy for granted and thought they had no need to prove, what no body disputed. And the the present Targum upon the Pfalms has otherwise explained it; yet That is well known, by learned men, to be a writing of no great. Authority, that appeared not till towards the conclusion of the fourth century: by which time the Jews had their old prejudices confirm'd by new forgeries; when their scattered Traditions were collected together, and no doubt enlarged. And yet it may be added, that it has, fince that, been explained by a celebrated Commentator of the Jews themselves, as clearly pointing out the Kingdom of Messiab +.

Mat. xxii. 48. + R. Saadiah Gaon. in Dan. 7. And

And if thus the Prophecy be allowed to SERM. refer to Christ; there will be no difficulty to prove, that it was accordingly fulfilled in the Event: I fay, there will be no difficulty in proving This, to them that will accept the tellimony of credible witnesses, and believe what is related, in Books fufficiently atteffed. For that Chriff, after his Refutrection, did bodily aftend into beaven, and fits there at the right hand of God, we are taught in fo many places of the new Testament, that the most superficial Reader inlay be able to observe then. This is that Exaltation, whereof most therpreters understand That of the Apostle, that God has bigbly exalted bim . This is That Superiofity of Glory and Honour, which inhas pleased the Father to confer upon him. that is all things he might have the preemi-

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fien to suggest while prejudices against the Catholick Doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, but expresenting it as inconsistent with the Nature of God, to admit of Exaltation, and that too by another superior to himself; by conducing therefore, that he, who was thus exalted, could not possibly he God over all; but most needs be some inferior, created Being. For we to not so contend, that he is God as to sorget his being Man. Nor whilst we affert this Unity of his Person, do we suggested to some phil it. 9. This is some mean.

SERM. mean to deny the distinction of his Natures.

XV. He, who is both God and man, is certainly capable of Exaltation: because, altho' the Godhead be supreme and omnipotent, and consequently can receive no accessions of Honour or Power; yet the nature of man is finite and dependent, and as such must needs

be capable of increase or diminution.

We are not of those Hereticks, who suppose his buman Nature to be absorped by the Divine, and teach such an absurd mixture or confusion of both, as should change the condition and quality of a finite creature, into the immense Power and Essence of an infinite Creator. But observing and admiring in him, as well the weaknesses of buman nature, as the essential Attributes of the Divine; it is in respect of his Humanity, and not of his Divinity, that we believe him to have been exalted.

If it should be replied by the Adversaries of the Catholick Faith, that all this is gratis dictum, and that we take for granted the very Question in dispute; I answer, that is, because their Objection no way presses us, nor shews us any reason for deserting our Hypothesis. We reckon That distinction to be justly founded on many passages of Scripture, may, to be the main Foundation of the whole System or Scheme of Christianity. Let them convince us of error if they can; and shew wherein we have mistaken those Oracles of God, or laboured from thence to propagate the cause of Falshood.

In the mean time, this Objection will put SERM. us in no fear; because it does not drive us to XV. any inconfiftency. We shall allow what they object, that God cannot be properly exalted, and that Christ Jesus was exalted in his human nature; and yet infift nevertheless, that he is God over all: because there is no fort of repugnancy between these Propositions; and therefore no reason to be assigned, why he, who affents to the one, should prefently give up and disclaim the other. He, who was both God and Man, might have new honours conferred on his Humanity; without any reflection on his Divine Power and Excellency, which was incapable of all addition. It was the Body of Christ, which his Disciples understood to be exalted; whilst they beheld him with their corporal eyes ascending into heaven, in order to be placed at the right hand of God. Which leads me, in order, to the next, or

[2] Second thing observable, namely, the Place, to which he is exalted, the right hand

of God.

It was the wild conceit of some ancient Hereticks, that the Divine Being is of human shape or figure. Because man is said to have been created in the image of God; they presently brought down God to the image of a man; they imagined him to be extended and circumscribed, composed of matter and form, and possessed of all the parts

SERM, or members of a human body. His hands XV. and eyes and ears they could explain without a figure; whilst they looked upon him to be

altogether such a one as themselves.

Far, Far be such extravagance from us! who have not to learnt the Doctrines of Chriftianity, as to be ignorant, that God is a spirit; and that a spirit bath not flesh and bones; that he is moreover such a spirit, as can no more be confined, than circumscribed: but fills heaven and earth with his Divine Presence; and is not so present in one place, as to be absent from another. Hands therefore and eyes and ears can be no otherwise ascribed to him, than in a figurative and improper fense; to denote fomething analogous to the offices of those Thus, because men are often looking upon, and taking care for what they most value; therefore is God's eye laid to be over the righteous, as being those, whom he more especially provides for and defends. So again, because the hand is the instrument of work and action; therefore, when the Scripture would illustrate the powerful interpolition of Divine Providence, it borrows the Metaphor from that part, and teaches us, that the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot Jave. And to the same purpose, lastly, because men are willing to hear and attend to the petitions of their Favourites; therefore are God's ears faid to be open to their cry, as being ever ready to hear and answer the devout prayers of his Servants. But

But, however from this observation we may SERM. derive a proper caution for the explaining of XV. this Article, that whilft Christ is faid to sit on the right hand of God; God may not be understood to have like parts or members with ourselves: yet surely they must be too fond of Metaphors, who can from hence conclude, (as some of Luther's Followers) for the Ubiquity or Omnipresence of the Body of Christ. They argue (it feems) from hence, that God's Power is properly denoted by his right band; and because his Power is over all his works, and cannot be excluded from any part of the creation; therefore they conclude, that he, who resides at the right hand of his Power, must be every where too*. But who perceives not the weakness and fallacy of this Conclusion? They are the inseparable properties of Matter to occupy some Space, to have Parts, and to be circumfcribed. And tho' the condition of glorified Bodies be very different from what we find at prefent; yet they are flill material and finite, and by confequence incapable of Omnipresence and Ubiquity. 'Tis therefore a just matter of our confolation, that our Religion prescribes no fuch abfurdity to be received, as an Article of Faith. Quite contrary, it teaches us, that "Tefus arose with that same body, which had been laid in the grave; that cloathed with human flesh, his Disciples beheld him ascend-

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^{*} See Limborch. Theol. Christ. 1. 3. c. 14. § 28.

XV. vens, which then received him, he shall continue till the times of restitution of all things.

And tho' he be faid to fit at the right hand of God; yet this can no more conclude him, to be every where at once, in his human nature, than those other passages, where God's eye is said to be over the righteous, may be thought to conclude for their Ubiquity. For as well might we argue, that they, who are under the eye of Providence, must needs be in all places where Providence is vigilant; as that he, who sits at the right hand of God, must be in all places, where his Power is exerted. The consequence in both these cases is alike necessary and just, i. e. it is by no means just or necessary in either.

Admit then, that by God's night hand, his Power is intended, which is active throughout all nature; yet he, who sits at his right hand, need not be omnipresent: 'tis enough, tho' he can be but in one place at once; if in that place the Divine Power be more conspicuous and manisest. Indeed, they who make Reply, that since God's right hand is every where; therefore wherever Christ is seated, it must be at the right hand of God*; do but trisse with the Article, instead of conquering the difficulty. For this is no more than to say, that whatever is, must needs be somewhere; and supposes every man to be as much

^{*} Limborch. ut supra.

at the right hand of God, as this Mediator SERM. between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. XV. But doubtless, 'twas the meaning of the Article, and of those passages of Scripture upon which it is built, to express a particular Exaltation of the human nature of Christ; and not to lay down such a general affertion, as is true of every thing else, as well as him.

And therefore, to speak my sense freely upon this matter; fince we find in Scripture, that God is pleased to make a more glorious Manifestation of himself in Heaven, and is therefore represented in the Revelation, as fitting on a throne*, and used to be figured out by the glorious Appearance of the Shechinah in the Yewish Sanctuary; and fince our Lord again ascended, with his natural body, which was certainly circumfcribed by place, and had both a right hand and a left; I fee not what should hinder us from taking it thus far literally, that he is placed with his left hand towards this glorious Manifestation of the Divinity, and fo, in no unufual fenfe, on the right hand of God.

To confirm which, it may be added, that St. Stephen, in his glorious vision, saw him actually in that position. Behold (says he) I fee the beavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right band of God; i.e. on the right side of the celestial Manifestation of Divine Glory. And lest his words should

^{*} Rev. iv. 2. + Acts vii. 56.

SERM. be wrested from their proper and literal, to a XV. figurative meaning; let us hear how St. Luke, in the Verse before, relates the history; be looked up (says he) stedsastly into heaven, and saw the Giory of God; which, as it used to signify the Shechinah in the Jewish Sanctuary; so here, without doubt, it means that glorious Manifestation of the Divinity in heaven; and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, i. e. of that Glory of God already mentioned. I shall detain you no longer upon this Subject, but proceed,

[3:] Thirdly, to enquire what Privileges are implied, in this Exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God. And they are principally these three; viz. Dignity, Power, and

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however the left hand might, in some nations, be esteemed the more honourable place; yet among the Hebrews we learn, from many instances, (and particularly, to name no other, from Jacob's Benediction of the sons of Joseph) that the right hand always had the preference. But whilst God has raised the man Christ Jesus above all other creatures, given him a name which is above every created name, and even put all things under his feet; it is manifest (as the Apostle to the Corinthians unanswerably argues) that he is himself excepted, who was the Author of this Exaltation, and did put all

* Acts vii. 55.

things under him. The throne therefore bught SERM. to be confidered, as the place of greatest Emi-XV. nence and prime Dignity. After That, the right hand is next to be regarded, as superior to the left, or any place around it. To which purpose we read, that when King Solomon was placed, as supreme upon his throne, he ordered a seat to be provided for his Mother at his right hand, as the place not superior, but immediately next in honour to his own.

So that when we read of Christ, that he is at the right hand of God, we are not to understand (with the Eutychian Hereticks) that his humanity is converted or absorped, much less made superior to the Divinity; (these are the grossest and most monstrous absurdates—as absurd and monstrous as to put finite for infinite;) but only, that God has highly exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saurour, and placed him in a station honourable above all others.

raised bim from the dead, and set bim at his own right hand, in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*. And in like man-

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^{*} Eph. i. 20, 21, 22, 23.

XV. Ascension into heaven, and being there placed on the right hand of God; I say, he makes it the consequence of this Exaltation, that Angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto him*. They are not only inserior in degree, but subject to his command. For besides, or together with his Dignity, we are to take notice, that this Exaltation of Christ

implies, wound ownered in hour harrance at

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(2.) Secondly his Power. For as places of dignity and honour are commonly invested likewise with authority; so the right hand of man being usually the strongest, is made a fit emblem of Strength and Power From whence it comes to pais, that the most furprizing Acts of the Divine Omnipotence are spoken of in Scripture, as done by the right hand of God. Thy right hand, O Lord, (fays Moses) is become glorious in power as thy right band, OLord, bath dashed in pieces the enemy +. And in like manner the Royal Pfalmift, The right band of the Lord is exalted, the right band of the Lord doth valiantly 1. And again, his right hand and his boly arm bath gotten him the victory ||. So that by this Exaltation to the right hand of God, the Regal Office and Authority of the Messiah is very properly set forth and described; in that he is raised to that state of eminence, which may fit the

¹ Pet. iii. 22. + Exod. xv. 6. † Pfalm cxviii. 16.

exercise of such Authority. The Father (says Serm. our Saviour) judgeth no man; but bath com- XV. mitted all judgment unto the Son. And the that Text refers to the executing of judgment by the fecond Person of the Trinity, rather than the first; yet it means that second Person, as united with the Manhood, and so becoming Mediator between God and Man.

And evenin his state of Humiliation, whilf he conversed upon earth; we may observe fome manifest tokens of his Royal Character. The Miracles he wrought, tho' belonging rather to his Prophetical, than to his Regal Of fice, did yet evidently display his Power !! and shewed, that even nature it felf was obedient to his word. But after his Refurrece tion, he more plainly entred upon the actual possession and administration of his Kingdom? in the gift of the Holy Ghoff the Comforter; in governing and prefiding over his Church; in commissioning the Apostles and their Success fors, as his proper Substitutes; in prescribing Laws for the direction of our Faith and Practice; and in the distribution of Rewards and Punishments; as well at prefent, in the Censures and Privileges of his Church; as hereafter more notoriously, in the Confummation of ages, and final judgment of Mankind.

I say, this his Regal Office and Dignity, is properly expressed by his session at God's right hand. For it becomes him, to whom the chief Power is committed, to fill the

Seat

SERM. Seat of Chief Dignity, and come next the XV. Sovereign, from whom his Rower is derived.

So we read upon fofeph's advancement, (who was, in this respect, a lively Type of Christ) that Pharaob said unto him, thou shall be over my house, and according to thy wood shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And so, in like manner, when the Apostle observes in the said over in the following that he father of glory had set Choist fesus at his own right hand in the beavenly places; he soon after subjoints, that he gave him to be head over all things to the Chunchit, making this Authority

er of Chris, which are both confiderations that contern his Regal Office. Longwip proceed to the and one proceed to the

the confequence of that Exaltation bib

which has relation to his Privilege, vizit Acres, which has relation to his Privilege, in that it denotes the acceptance of his Suit, and the prevalence of his Interchiffon forward as and

The nearer any Person is to him, whose sayour he designs to produce, (provided he be but a worthy and he specimen) the better prospect he will have of Success. And the it be true, that God, as he is omnipresent, could have heard our Saviour's Intersection in any part of the world; yet we may conceive much better hopes of our Cause, when we see this our Spokesman so highly honour-

Gen. xli. 40. ... Bph. i. 20, 22. Dino

ed, and admitted into the more immediate SERM.

presence chamber (as I may so speak) of the XV.

Divine Majesty. Accordingly the Scriptures,
we find, lay very great stress on this acceptance of our High Priest; and deduce very
pertinent Inferences of Comfort and Assurance
from it. We have (says one Apostle) an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*. And Christ is entred (says another)
into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence
of God for us +. And yet more expressly again,
We have such an High Priest, who is seen the
right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the
heavens:

From hence then it appears, that his Intercession; is not mean or servile; that he does not supplicate as one doubtful of success or unworthy of the Favour; but as one, who is conscious of the Father's Goodness and readiness to hear; as one, who has merited the things he asks, and already enjoys that place of supreme Dignity, as the Reward of his, Obedience. And from hence therefore we may derive matter of folid comfort and confolation to ourselves, that our cause is pleaded by one of fuch high Honour and Merit, that we need not be in fear left his Suit should, be rejected; in whom, whilst upon earth, the Father declared himself to be well pleased; and whom, he has affured us, by raifing him to his own right hand, that he will always

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SERM. hear. All this I shall have occasion to ex-XV. plain farther, when I proceed to speak parti-

cularly of our Saviour's Intercession.

In the mean time it may be proper to obferve, that there is no fuch inconfiftency between this act of the Priesthood, and the execution of his Regal office, as the Socinians pretend. For the objects of these offices are
plainly different. His acts, as a Priest, are directed immediately to God, they terminate
in the appearing of his Wrath, and procurement of his Favour: In his acts, as a King, his
subjects only are concerned; They are those
wise methods of government, by which he
sees it requisite to rule and order them.

There would indeed be fome force in the objection, if this Regal Power of Chrift, confidered as the Mediator between God and man, (for 'tis in that capacity alone the present question concerns him) were every way absolute and independent. But that can be faid of none but the Divine Power. Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom was given him by God; It was He that fet bis King upon his boly bill of Sion. But he must not be imagined to have so committed the Government to him, as to abdicate himself. Rather, as the Apostle to the Corintbians argues; when God is faid to have put all things under him, it is manifest, that he is himself excepted, who was the Author of his Exaltation, and did put all things under him*.

From whence it is observable, that the same SERM. acts are sometimes ascribed to God, and at XV. other times to Christ; because all the Regul acts of Christ as Mediator, he does by virtue of a power derived or committed to him by the Father. So that by virtue of his Priefly Office, he propitiates the Divine Majesty; and by virtue of his Regal, he bestows the Favour of God rendered thus propitious. By the one, he pleads his Merit with the Father, and inclines him to be favourable and gracious unto Sion: By the other, he bestows those Gifts upon his Church, which his powerful Intercession has obtained for them. In that he acts for men to God, in this from God to men; in both as a middle Person, or the one Mediator between God and man.

Let Joseph in the Court of Pharaoh be a lively illustration of this matter. He had the government of Egypt committed to his care; but yet Pharaoh reserved the supremacy to himself. Therefore when his Father and his Brethren came down, he acquainted Pharaoh with the Case; who again referred it to him, to make provision for them. He interceded with Pharaoh in their behalf, and this not in a suppliant and distant form, but only by representing their condition and relation to himself; and then he acted, and made suitable provision, by virtue of that authority he had obtained from him.

a obtained from him

SERM Mordon this account of a delegated Pow-XV. or at all derogate from Christis natural and mercal Rower and Godhead. For he is confidered dinder two very different nations, when we look upon him in respect of his Divine Nature as the is God over all; and when we regard bimis the Christ of God, or Medio afor between God and man. In the former view his Kingdom is not subordinate or info rior to enother; but he is of one fubitance with the Father, the Fountain and Original of all Power, and no way divided from him in Kingdome in Rower and in Glory In the latter the burran nature is affumed to the Dir wine, which not only may but indeed must be inferior and fabordinate. a sa diod ni nam

And the there he in him a personal Union of these two natures; yet that alters not the case, so long as the natures themselves remain perfectly distinct. His Divine Nature receives no additional Powers, because its Powers is already insinite, and so incapable of all addition. But it is not so with the Humanity; his human nature may have new powers communicated and derived to it from the Holy Trinity. And a mind on the Holy Trinity.

Let us try if we can discover some faint resemblance of this matter in surselves. We perceive there is in us a personal Union of Soul and Body. The Soul, the mean while, is a spiritual active Substance, by nature made immortal, and so capable of everlasting Happiness

piness or Misery. But the body constant had Sex M. hand, is material and gross, and wanterso have XV. its present frame and conditution changed in order to qualify it for the participation of eternal Rewards on Punishments but helperfonal union of these two substances has not confounded them together; but has preferred the nature and properties of both diffines, The body is not now immortal because the Soul is to one will the Soul, from the future change of the Body, receive any addition to its own immortality. lo So, he whilthouthe Divine Nature referves its own original Supremacy the human is still limited and dependent, and as such may have a derivative Majesty conferred upon it; and can indeed have no power on authority, but what is given it from above. And thus far of the Privileges implied in our Saviours Exaltation. If remains for pacin the Fourth place, to propose some Cont fiderations concerning the Policies in which our Lord is represented? Which, shopstube not expresly mentioned in the Text before us may yet be easily collected from other passages of Scripture, where we commonly find him represented as striving at the right-hand terable; as the he were continue to a abod to Herebyg fome have chought his authority. as our Judge to be implied, it being the cuftom of Judges to fit updni the bench when they are hearing causes; or pronouncing sen-

tence: or else the Assurance and Essicacy of

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SERM. his Intercession, which wants not to be reXV. commended by a humble Posture; from whence the Author to the Hebrews seems, in this respect, to oppose our High Priest to the Priests under the Law; who were bound to expressions of lowliness and reverence in their ministrations: in that there (as he observes) every Priest stoop daily ministring and offering; whereas this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for fins, for ever SAT DOWN on the

right hand of God viscos who the him we went

But the fuch kind of observations may be piously intended, and, if not rigidly insisted on, are no way culpable; yet I would not willingly indulge too great a liberty to fuch conjectures: because the Scripture it self does not constantly and invariably keep to the same phrase in the descriptions of this matter. For not only St. Paul in the Text, fays, He IS at the right hand of God, without naming any particular Posture; but St. Stephen more particularly names the Posture of flanding; Bebold (fays he) I fee the beavens opened, and the fon of man STANDING on the right hand of God +. Whether fitting then, or flanding, neither must be supposed constant and unalterable; as tho' he were confined to a posture, and must always keep his body in the same figure. But from both together, or from either separately, I hope we may have warrant fufficient to observe, www. a unutination river

Heb. x. 11, 12. + Acts vii. 56.

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- 2. The continuance of his government. XV.

And the some show they they to de forme (1.) First, some have thought that Christ's fitting at the right hand of God, implies a perfectly indolent and unactive state; that he has no care of government upon him at prefent; having not yet begun his glorious Reign, nor indeed being like to do fo, till all his enemies shall be perfectly subdued . For thus they would strengthen their argument, by observing, that the Pfalmist represents God as making the enemies of Christ his footstool. whilst he only fate by himself as a spectator. And fo they may argue plaufibly enough, who can perfuade themselves, that bis kingdom is of this world; and therefore cannot believe it is already begun, fo long as they fee no outward figns, nor visible appearance of it.

But one would be really furprized to find the like delution prevail with others, who allow, nay contend, that his kingdom is not from bence, neither cometh with external pomp and observation. One would wonder why fuch men should imagine, that Christ never intended to govern his Church by Substitutes and Vicegerents; that if he would rule, he should appear in Person; and that no man is accountable for his conduct to any but himself; that he has not even committed fuch spiritual Powers to his Ministers, as are

^{*} Vid. Limborch lib. 3. cap. 14. \$ 27. & cap. 24. \$ 6. TIVET.

These are such wild notions, as I am apt to think Erastus himself, the famed Patron of our moderne enemies to exclesialized authority, would have blished to own. They are plainly such, as that the sinews of all discipline and order, and destroy the very being or subsists.

ente of the Church, as a fociety.

a I have already daid before you fome proofs of Christis internal and spiritual Kingdom; which the anot of this world, not derived from any vidiman authority, nor happortinguit felfiably civil familions is yet to be upheldros continued in this world; by the cecroid of shafe mystical and spiritual Powers, which are respondicated and given out by Christ hibridly who the Father has appointcallour, Heart and Soversign no I thewed you how his possession of his Kingdom is sufficidatly implicitly by this very Section at the right Hand of God wwhich forme have arged as an objection ingainstitui Abd when the Continuander off dosuKingdom tike wife is foretold, that he should that at God's right band till his enemied bb made his fobatonte This must include at least all bhe risie from his Ascention into heaven moshe final conquest of those enemies. Andafo Staffinil/ wie find, accordingly applies it in his Epifile to the Corintbians; He must nor reign

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reign (fays he) 'till he bath put all enemies un-SERM.

der bis feet *; He is not after that to begin his XV.

reign, but he must reign 'till then.

-May, and this very act of Regal Power too (the act of subduing or putting down his enemiet) is indifferently afcribed in Scripture either to God or Christ. Sometimes God is faid to make his enemies his footfool; and at other times he is fait to Subdue all things to himself. Which is occasioned partly by the hypostatical union of two natures in him. whereby he is God and than in one person; for that his acts are properly and indeed the acts of God; and partly by that commission helthas received as Mediator, whereby his Mediatorial Kingdom is derived from God? and his Anthority to exercise such Power subordinate to him. And therefore in that very Pfalm, where God promises to make his enemies bis foothood, we find him, in the next verile, laying to the Meffah, (which shews him that filent or unactive in the matter,) The Lord Shall fend the rad of THY strength out of Zion, rule Thou in the midft of thine eneorgheto explain that Prophecies, which nam s. From the Rollure then, in which our Lord is represented, we are not to imaging that he is perfectly unactive, and has not yet entered upon the Administration of his Kingdom. But ver we may, I think, with good reason

* i Cor avi zh. † + Pfals ck. 2.

conclude that his reign is quiet anith ference,

XV. doms of the earth, nor exposed to changings or uncertainties: so that he need not be travelling from place to place, to secure himself or his dominion; but may safely keep still in his throne, which is immoveable and fixt. For the his enemies be mighty and rage borribly, yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier, and need be at no expense or trouble to descat them; but can confound them at his pleasure with the breath of his mouth.

(2.) Secondly, the next thing hereby implied, is the Continuance of his Government, For fitting and standing are Postures void of motion, and imply continuance. Now the Scriptures are very full and express for the eternal duration of the Messiah's Kingdom; that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom*; that the Lord God shall give unto bim the throne of his father David, and be shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end+. And in the same sense, I judge, we ought to explain those Prophecies, which promile the Perpetuity of the Kingdom to the feed of David; which were no otherwise accomplished than in this spiritual reign of the Meshab. The secular government over the Tribes of Ifrael has long fince been taken from the Family of David; and that people scat-

• Haiah ix. 7. † Luke i. 32, 33.

tered

tered throughout all Kingdoms without any SERM. proper diffinct Head or Governor. So that XV. those Predictions of Perpetuity can no otherwife be understood than of that promised Seed and Successor of David, whose Kingdom is elsewhere declared to be an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion that which shall not be destroyed, assured and some see see well

Nay, and fince the Church triumphant (whereof he is head) is to endure eternally; it must surely be absurd to suppose his Kingdom and Government should fail, which is to represent the Body as without its Head. Quite contrary, the Scriptures represent it as the utmost of our Hopes and Ambition, that we shall reign with Christ hereafter; and teach us, by a necessary consequence, that his Reign shall not first be abrogated. And in the Revelation, to the same purpose, we find that bleffing, bonour, glory and power, are ascribed unto the Lamb for ever and ever * From all which it must appear, that Christ remaineth a King for ever, and as being raifed from the dead be dieth no more, so being now at the right hand of God exalted, his glory shall fustain no diminution or decrease: neither any ceffion of his own, nor the will of his Father, nor the malice of his enemies, nor the longest period that can be named, shall ever abolish or conclude his Government dil

the Farnity of Parigo. Finds that people fait-

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SERM. Against This indeed it is objected, that XV. the Pfalmift makes mention of his beigning

no longer than till bis enemies be made his footfrot Sit thou on my right band, until I make thine enemies thy foot fool. Now whatever order be observed in conquering the rest of his enemies, the Devil, Antichrist and Sin (and if there be any others that come under the fame Character) yet the Apostle says exprefly, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is DEATH. And when that shall be, it is easy to refolve; at the day of general Judgment; when all dead bodies shall revive, the wicked shall be fentenced to eternal Misery, the righteous rewarded with eternal Happiness, and death thereby be fivallowed up in vistory* From whence it may be thought, that Chris's Reign shall last no longer than till the configurmation of ages, when he shall fee this final conquest and destruction of his enemies. For if he only was to reign till his enemies were made bis footfool, or fulldued unto him, and Death, which is the last and most stubbons enemy, shall be then entirely vanquished and destroyed; it may feem to some a necessary confequence, that then his Reign shall cease with the opposition of his enemies, and those preffing occasions, which his Church had had for his Favour and Protection, an August and

But however plausibly this objection may be represented to a common Reader; yet they

* 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54.

Agains

must

must be perfect Arangers to the Hebrew SERM. Idiam and the manifest propriety of Scripture lengilage, who are not fenfible that the word until is often used only inclusively of the time before and not exclusively of that to come. So that dit is a good argument of Christ's reigning at present, and till the consummation of ages, (in opposition to the forementioned conceit of his filence and inactivity) but not of his abdicating then, or ceasing to govern any longer. Rather the phrase, which follows, implies the contrary. For to what end should his enemies be made his footstool? Surely to increase the glory of his Majesty, and hot to put an end to it; to faile his Empire to a more flourishing condition, and not to abolist or take it from him. A footstool, tho' not honourable in it felf, yet adds to the honour of the person it supports, and implies him to be feated on a throne. And therefore fince Chrift's enemies subdued are to be made his footfool; it must be most unreasonable to Suppose, that his Empire should conclude with their opposition, when it will but shine forth with more conspicuous lustre. and and to the

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There may be greater difficulty in another Passage, in the sirst Epistle to the Corintbians, which some have thought an unanswerable argument to this purpose. Then cometo the end (says the Apostle) when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority

SERM, authority and power. And when all things

XV. Shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also

bimself be subject unto him that put all things

under him, that God may be all in all*

From hence some have concluded that Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom shall be abrogated, when the end of his Mediation is accomplished; that as he received it by commission from the Father, so he shall surrender it again +. But I think the passages of Scripture before alledged, do fufficiently make out the eternal duration of his Government And the Eternity may be fometimes taken in a more reftrained and limited fense; yet there are fuch circumstances, in some at least of the Authorities above cited, as cannot admit of any limitations. They fet forth the fame Truth in fuch diversity of expressions, they place it in fuch various lights, they not only mention this Kingdom to be eternal, but expresly deny any ending or cessation of it. that not even the Eternity of the Divine Being can be expressed in stronger terms or more fignificant. And then furely, it must be most unreasonable to understand all this under certain narrow limitations and referves, without any foundation in the nature of the thing, and moved only by the supposed authority of a fingle Text, far more intricate in it felf, and not to be illustrated by any comparison

¹ Cor. xv. 24, 28. + Whitby in Locum & Outram de Sacrif. in fine:

of other passages. Every Text, no doubt, is SERM. true in the sense the Holy Ghost intended it. XV. But then that sense is not in all places evident alike. And therefore the more abstructe should be explained by such as are more clear and manifest.

Others, again, have attempted to reconcile the feeming difference, by diftinguishing between Christ's Kingdom, considered as the Messiah, and as Mediator; and have thought that the former should have no end, but the latter might. But this, under favour, I conceive to be a distinction without a difference; because he is called the Messiah in the same respects, and for the same reasons, as he is the Mediator, as being anointed to his sacred Offices, and so appointed to mediate between God and men. His Kingdom therefore, as Messiah and as Mediator, is the same; and it must be vain to expect any advantage from so groundless a distinction.

But there are two other ways of accounting for the matter, which feem liable to less exception. In the first place it is certain, that great part of his Regal Office shall cease of course, when he shall have subdued his enemies, rewarded his servants, and done granting those aids and affistances, which are necessary for this state of trial and temptation. Consequently he may then in some sense be said to deliver up his Kingdom, as forbearing

^{*} Limborch lib. 3 cap. 25. § 14.

SERM. to execute those parts of his Office, which are
XV. proper only for the present condition of the
Church militant. But still, he may preside
eventhe glorious members of his Church triumphant, he may head them in their praises;
he may exert such acts of Government, as we
cannot fully understand, till we are, our selves
translated to that state of Glory. This accounts, in some measure, for the surrendry of
his Kingdom, without supposing it to be

that the factor of thould have a bendloday last I Opit may be faid (which is the other med thod of folution) that by delivering up the Kingdom to the Father, is only meant the referring it to him as Head, and first in order that when once Chris has subdued all things to himself, and brought his faithful (fetvant) to confummate Glory; they will them be red ferred up to the Father as his peculiure like? wife in and throw Cheift, who is himfelf referred to the fame Father as his Head And then as to that fubjection or fubordination of the Son, which the Apostle mentions? it is not to be imagined, that any new fubordination shall then commence, which had no existence before; "that (as a late Writer well expresses:it) is the Son will then be more sub-" ject than he is now; that his triumphant fate " hall come short of his militant; and that "he is to decrease, when all his faints and " fervants are to increased No: Bub as he " was always fubordinate to the Father as a cc fon

"fon, so will he be then also," (and that sub-SERM. ordination will be more amply displayed and XV. declared.) "when he shall have subdued all "enemies, and shall bring all his friends with him, puriting them by himself, the band and cement of union with the Father. "Then shall he reign in peace, and of his "Kingdom shall he no end. His Father also shall reign by him and with him, and "shall be acknowledged still as his Head and "Father to whom he is referred."*

To this putpose, he is represented, as making together with the Father but one Temple and one Light of, and sitting on the same Throne; and it is accordingly proposed, as the utmost of our hopes and ambition, that we also shall reign with him: which does not surely imply that his Reign or Government shall be abolished; but rather, that it shall shine out in greater Splender, and display it self with more advantage. To him then, who sits at the right hand of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he all honour and glery, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

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Remarks on Dr. Clark's Catech. p. 42, 43.

† Rev. xxi. 22, 23.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

et the riel a Hand of Cop.

The Design, Manner, and Efficacy of CHRIST's Intercession.

has beell ROM. wiii. 33, 340 ad line

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is rifen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Das asqui mo.l.

SERM. FTER having formerly dispatched XVI. A the two first Particulars observable in the method used for our Redemption, as they are fuggested to our consideration in the Text, viz. the Death and Refurrection of Christ (It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again). The order I had proposed to follow, and which the Text likewise suggests, led me in the last place to attend to his Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, and make continual Intercession for us. And in That, there are plainly these two things confiderable, viz.

(1.) Christ's

(1.) Christ's Exaltation it self, at the right SERM. Hand of God. And, XVI.

I have already explained the nature of his Exaltation, and the Privileges denoted or implied by it, the Dignity of his Person, the Efficacy of his Priesthood, and the continuance of his Government. And I have guarded likewise against those mistakes and hurtful consequences, which ignorant or malicious men might be led to infer from it. It remains now only for me to proceed, in order

plain to you the Intercession which Christ makes for us, at God's right Hand. Who also maketh intercession for us. And this, I conceive, will be sufficiently done, when we have considered it, with regard to the Design, the Manner, and the Efficacy of it. And,

Intercession; That (if we would explain it properly) must be the procuring the Divine Favour towards sallen men; and acting in our nature, as our Patron with God. And that it ought to be thus taken properly, is evident; because it is mentioned as a Sacerdotal act, or one great part of our Saviour's Priesthood. For he has (says the Apostle) an unchangeable Priesthood; wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for Vol. II.

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SERM, them: for fuch an High Priest became us; and XVI. so on *.

Now he, who reads the Scriptures with attention, cannot be ignorant, that the Priefly Office has God for its Object, and is directed immediately to him. To this purpose the Author to the Hebrews is express, that every High Priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God +. So that when Christ Jesus is mentioned as our High Priest, and his Intercession as one effential part of his Prieftbood; it is hereby manifeftly implied, that this his Intercession is made for men to God: and consequently, that it is defigned to procure the Favour of God towards us. From whence it is observable, that to intercede, and to accuse, are used, in Scripture, as contradiffinct, opposite Terms; and therefore, as the latter of these signifies, to traduce or impeach one to, or before another; fo the former must fignify, in the reverse, to appear as his Advocate or Patron. Nay, and to take off all doubt in this matter, he is exprefly diffinguished by that Appellation. For we have an ADVOCATE with the Father (tays St. John) Jefus Christ the righteous 1.

Now the business of an Advocate is too well known, to admit of any dispute. Tis to plead the cause of one party with another; and therefore he, who is our Advocate with

* Heb. vii. 24, 25, 28. + Heb. v. 1. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.

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the Father, must plead our cause before him, SERM. in order to procure his Favour and Goodwill XVI. towards us. The original word is here indeed the same, as is used elsewhere of the Holy Ghost, when he is called the Paraclete or Comforter. And to him likewise the Scriptures have ascribed a kind of Intercession. For of him we find it said, that he maketh intercession

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But fince one reason, why that appellation is given to the Holy Ghost, seems to be his dictating to the Apostles, what they should say or plead for themselves, when cited before the Kings or great ones of the Earth, take no thought bow or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye Shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your father which speaketh in you *: And fince one Instance of his making Intercession for the Saints, is explained in other words, when he is faid to belp our infirmities, or suggest to true Believers proper matter of Prayer, and ardency in offering it before the Throne of Grace for their own welfare and happiness: And another Instance of his Intercession lies in his directing the general petitions of the faithful to the attainment of that special relief, which he knows to be proper and convenient for them, in which respect it is said, that he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the

* Mat. x. 19, 20.

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Spirit

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SERM. Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the XVI. saints according to the will of God*: I say, when all this is considered, it is sufficiently clear, even from these instances, that the proper notion of an Advocate or Intercessor is the same, which has already been explained. For if the Holy Ghost be therefore represented under those characters, because he directs and teaches men to plead for themselves; then those characters must properly belong to him, who personally appears himself in their behalf.

And to this purpose it is yet farther observable, that we are directed to ask or pray to the Father in the Name of Christ; because he is our Patron to appear for us, and no Prayers, but those which he recommends and patronizes, will ever be accepted. So that Christ's Intercession denotes not meerly his good will or affection towards mankind: (That has not God but man for its object; That does not represent him as our Advocate with the Father, which is the plain fense and language of the Scripture!) nor yet is it meerly metaphorical, as the Socinians dream, concerning That and his whole Priesthood; who pretend, that he is called our High Prieft, our Advocate, our Intercessor, for no other reason than to denote that his Regal Power, by which he bestows the Benefits of Grace and Salvation on his Church, is not

* Rom. viii. 27.

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originally in himself, but derived to him SERM. from another; and is as much owing to that XVI. other's confent, as if it had been actually extorted from him by the most pompous Sacrifices and importunate Solicitations. must mean an actual and proper application to the Father for the acceptance of us and our addresses to him; for the full pardon and remission of our Sins; for the admission of us at present to the means of Grace, and thereby in the end to everlasting happiness. Let this suffice to have been said of the nature and Defign of our Saviour's Intercession.

My next business must be,

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[2.] Secondly, to enquire, with all due fubmission, into the circumstance and Manner of it. And here we must take care, that we ascribe nothing to this gracious Interceffor, unworthy his Royal Character and high Dignity; no diffidence or doubt of a desponding mind; no anxious concern, no trouble or uneafiness for the success of his Suit; no prostrate body, no expanded hands, no bended knees; nothing but what may perfectly become him, who is a King as well as a Priest; who, as a Priest, founded not his Suit upon another's merit, but his own; who is placed at the right hand of God, far above the highest of those Orders, in whom such like acts of humility and self-abasement might be proper and becoming; who, in one word, has the Divine Nature personally united with the human, X 3

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SERM. and is, as touching his Divinity, equal to the XVI. Father, with whom he intercedes. So that Christ's Intercession for us, must imply his acting as our Advocate or Patron, in some manner suitable to the dignity of his Person, and to the previous Merit and Atonement of

his Sufferings.

Now this was once every year prefigured under the Jewish Occonomy by the High Priest, on the great Day of Expiation: Who entered then into the inmost Sanctuary with the blood (which was the main part) of the Sacrifices he had offer'd, in order to fprinkle it before the Mercy Seat, as in the more immediate presence of God; thereby to reprefent the Atonement he had made for the Offences of the people. The High Priest in this, was but a type of Chrift, the great High Priest of our Profession; who likewise, after he had offer'd up himfelf our Sacrifice upon the Cross, entered not into the boly places made with hands; but into heaven itself*, (which the inmost Sanctuary of the Jews could only ferve to figure out) there to present, not his Blood only, but his whole Humanity before God, as the Victim flain already for the Sins of Mankind; and so to recommend both us and our performances to the Divine favour and acceptance, upon account of the Satisfaction and Merit of his Death.

* Heb. ix. 24:

This is called, in Scripture, his offering SERM. himself to God, and his appearing in the pre- XVI. sence of God for us. And because, in those -Heavens, which have thus receiv'd him, he shall continue 'till the times of restitution of all things, and for ever fit down at the right hand of God; therefore is it said of him, that be ever liveth to make intercession for us.

His Oblation therefore of himself, and his Intercession for us, do no otherwise differ, than as the beginning and continuance of the fame act. His Oblation made in Heaven, at the time of his Ascension, was the beginning of his Intercession for us; and his Intercesfion is but the continuance of that Oblation. His appearance in the presence of God, as the Victim before flain for our Sins, serves fitly to express both the one and the other; fince 'tis by That representation of the Sacrifice of himself, that he continually procures us the benefit of Pardon and Grace.

Whilst by such his appearance he recommends us and our performances to the favour of God, the acceptance of our Prayers must be certainly included. And this again, under the Law was prefigured by the High Priest's offering Incense, commonly without the Vail, but once a year before the Mercy Seat within it; as the fymbol of the people's Prayers, to render them effectual and acceptable with God.

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SERM. That this was the real defign of Incense, XVI. that it had indeed fuch analogy to Prayer, may appear, -from King David's defire, that his prayer might be set forth as incense; *from the custom of the people to be praying in their Court, at the same time the Priest, in their name, was burning Incense in the Temple ; +-- from much Incense being faid in the Revelation to be offer'd, together with the prayers of all faints, upon the golden altar; | (which has manifest allusion to the Incense offer'd on the golden Altar by the Priest, under the Jewish Oeconomy;) -nay laftly, (and to put this matter beyond all doubt) from fuch Odours or Incense being faid expresly to be the prayers of Saints. Wherefore, (as a learned Author argues to this purpose,) " if the Jewish High Priest " were a type of our High Priest, Christ " Jefus, if the inmost Sanctuary figured out " the highest Heaven, and the sacred In-"cense, the Prayers of the Saints: It can-" not be otherwise, but that the High Priest " of the Jews offering to God That Incense " in the inmost Sanctuary, must prefigure " our High Priest now in Heaven, recom-" mending to God the Prayers of the Chrif-"tian Church. I was some and , and said

For this reason are we directed to come to God by Christ; we are taught, that no man can come to the Father but by bim; we

* Pfal. cxli. 2. + Luk. 1. 10. | Rev. viii. 3. ‡ Vid. Outram. de Sacrif. lib. 2. cap. 7. §. 4. are exhorted to offer up our Prayers only in his SERM.

name, as expecting no otherwise, to be accept- XVI.

ed, but thro' the benefit of his Merits and

Intercession for us. Which leads me'to the

[3.] Third and last thing proposed to be consider'd, under this head, namely, the

Efficacy of our Saviour's Intercession.

In this respect we find a wide difference between him and the Advocates or Patrons upon earth. For while he intercedes for Man with God, he pleads no dubious cause, h fears no contrary event; but being " most " high in the glory of God the Father," and having already paid the price of our Redemption, he has only to represent the fatisfaction he has made, and is ever certain of fuccess, ever fure to be heard. At his first entrance on his Ministry, behold! how his Father with a glorious voice declared him his beloved Son, in whom he was well bleafed. And after his Refurrection, when he had conquer'd Death and Hell, and made fatisfaction for the Sins of men; behold! how God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, and thereby testified his acceptance of him as our Priest, when he thus appointed him to be our King. For fince his Intercession is nothing else but his appearing in the presence of God, as the victim flain for us; and fince upon his first making that appearance, God placed him at his own right hand; what else can we infer from

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XVI. the Efficacy of that Intercession, which he makes for us?

I know but one Objection to be made with any colour of reason; and that is, the univerfality of our Redemption. For that Christ died a Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole world, is fo plainly testified in holy Writ, that it cannot be denied, without shameful negligence in confulting the Scriptures, or manifest violence and distorsion in explaining them. And therefore, if his present Interceffion be a representation of that Sacrafice before God, and of the Satisfaction he has thereby made for the Sins of the whole world; from hence it feems to follow, that either all mankind shall be faved by him, or else his Intercession has not that Efficacy it has been faid to have.

But this Difficulty will be eafily removed, when 'tis confider'd that Christ died, and confequently intercedes for all; not absolutely; but upon certain terms and conditions. He died and intercedes for all, sufficiently to procure them the offers of Grace and Salvation; so that if they perish, the defect is not in him, but in themselves; there is nothing wanting on his part, to bring all men to be saved. They, who embrace the opportunities afforded them, they find by experience the mighty Power and Essicacy of their Saviour's Intercession. But they who instead

instead of this refuse to comply; as they have SERM. not the benefit from it, so neither are they abso- XVI. lately and strictly included within the defign of it: fince his Interceffion extends to all, only upon condition of fuch compliance; and therefore has it's intended Efficacy, in faving fuch as do accordingly comply. which reason we find him sometimes repre-

fented, as interceding only for fuch.

Thus St. Paul, in the Text, is manifestly speaking of the Privileges of the Elect, or fuch as answer the end of their high Calling; in contradiffinction to all fuch as are left under the curse and condemnation of the Law: being either not receiv'd into the Church; or at least forfeiting their Privilege, by naming only the name of Christ, without departing from iniquity. And in like manner, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, he represents this Intercession of Christ, as made for Them (by way of emphasis) that come unto God by bim; i. e. fuch as depend upon his Merits and mediation for them; fuch as in confidence thereof apply to God for mercy only in and thre' him; and are from thence encouraged with chearfulness to observe the Terms which are requir'd of them. All which refiriction or limitation of his Interceffion arifes evidently from hence; that the' he intercedes for all conditionally (and indeed fufficiently as to his own part, there being no defect of merit in him, nor backwardness

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SERM. in God to accept) yet it is eventually and in XVI. effect for none but men of this character; who complying with the gracious Terms of his prevailing Intercession, are manifestly entitled to the Benefits and Privileges of it. And with respect to such indeed, the mighty Prevalence and Efficacy of it is abundantly attested. Wherefore he is able (fays the Author to the Hebrews) to fave to the uttermost, them that come unto God by bim, seeing be ever liveth to make intercession for them *. From hence he promifes us fuccess in our addresses to God, and gives us assurance, that what soever we shall ask the Father in his name (or upon the account of his Mediation) be will give it us. +

Not that even the best of men are to expect their Prayers should be always answer'd in kind! He who knows our wants, much better than we can ourselves, must be best able to judge what is sit to be granted us, and what not. And therefore St. John has added a proper limitation in this matter, that this is the considence we have in him, that if we ask any thing ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

be beareth us. I lo on signification in the bear

But then the denial of improper requests, fuch as are not made according to his Will, proceeds not from any rejection of our Prayers, nor from any want of interest in our Pa-

^{*} Heb. vii. 25. + Joh. xv. 16. Chap. xvi. 23.

is indeed confistent with those Petitions them—XVI. selves: fince good men's Prayers are always made with a reserved submission to the Will of God; and sue for nothing, any otherwise, than as it shall seem proper or expedient to his Godly Wildom. Accordingly they are directed to better purposes than we can ask or think, by the secret energy of the Holy Ghost, that Divine Comforter, who is ever affishing to the Prayers of faithful men, and (as the Apostle speaks) maketh intercession for them, with groanings which cannot be utter'd. *

And thus, I have confidered the Doctrine of our Saviour's Intercession, with regard to the Design, the Manner, and the Essicacy of it. I have shewn you, how it is the continual representation of the Christian Sacrifice before God, in order to procure his Favour towards man; which it does accordingly to all those, who comply with the Terms, upon which that Favour is desir'd. I must crave your attention yet a little longer, whilst I make some brief application of this Matter to ourselves. And

1. First then, let us stand still a while, to admire here the goodness of Almighty God, in making such provision for us, and admitting us to plead with him (as it were) by Proxy. It is not usual (we know) in

^{*} Rom. viii. 27.

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SERM. earthly Courts, for men of mean rank to ap-XVI. ply themselves in person without ceremony to their Prince; but to get their Petition or themselves presented to him, by the hand of some person of superior Quality. Now whatever might be the Privilege of mankind in the state of Innocence; yet polluted as we are with Sin, we could not, with any confidence, presume to approach the presence of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look upon Iniquity, without the Interpolition and Mediation of another. In this miferable condition, whilst we lay involv'd, void of all power to support ourselves, and destitute of succour from abroad, it was an unspeakable instance of the Divine Goodness, that he, whom we had offended, should himself provide the means of our deliverance; and by an unconceivable union of the Divine and human nature in one Person, should find out a fit Spokesman or Mediator, to intercede and make Atonement for us.

2. Secondly, since this Intercession of Christ is but the representation of that Sacrifice he made for Sin; from hence it may appear, that there is nonerbut he can properly intercede for us; because there is no other besides him, that has first died and given himself for us. There is one stays the Apostle) i. e. there is but one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who

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gave bimself a Ransom for us all. The SERM. foundation of his Mediation or Intercession XVI. with the Father, is that Ransom he has given for all. And therefore all others, wanting that foundation, do want, in reality, the very thing, which should qualify them for fuch Mediation. Good men indeed may offer up their Prayers, and so in some sense intercede for us; and so perhaps may Angels and departed Saints. To which purpose we are all required to make Intercession for all men, and especially for such as are in authority. But then there is a wide difference between the word thus applied to us, and as 'tis used of Christ. We pray for one another, not in our own names; but in the name of Obrife: So that our Interceffions are refolv'd ultimately into bis, and 'tis only by virtue of his Intercession, we can expect to have our own, for other mens accepted. From hence therefore

the Church directs us to offer up our Prayers thro' Jesus Christ our Lord: because we are not fit to approach the Divine Presence in our own name, nor may hope to have any of our Petitions accepted from ourselves; but only as they are offer'd up for us by this powerful Intercessor. Him the Father always beareth; and if we desire to be heard, we should be sure to make our request in his name, and get them presented by him; we should

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XVI. worthiness, and rely wholly upon his Merit and Mediation, who is most worthy to be heard and to be accepted. Thus whilst our Petitions are offer'd up thro' Christ, they are moreover offer'd by him, he undertakes our cause, and presents them before God: it being one part of his Intercession (as already explain'd) to recommend or patronize the

devout Prayers of his Church. Dans que bas

4. Fourthly, feeing we have now fuch an High Priest to intercede for us, by appearing always in the presence of God, who has declared his approbation and acceptance of him, by placing him at his own right hand; let us advance boldly to the throne of Grace, and entertain an humble trust and confidence in his Merits, who is able to fave us to the uttermost. Had we nothing to depend on, but our own worthines; most just it would be in us, to despair for ever of Pardon and Salvation. For what reparation can we ever make to the Divine Justice, for our past violations of the Law of God? What security can we pretend to give for better Obedience in the time to come? That Corruption of nature, which has formerly betray'd us into breaches of our Duty, will still render us incapable of perfect Obedience for the future, and of making fatisfaction for our past defects. But when we reflect 'tis Christ who pleads our cause, who first died for our Redemption, and by vir-

tue of the Sacrifice then made for Sin, con-SERM. tinues still his Intercession for us; what shall XVI. we despair of gaining, who have such a powerful Patron, fuch an Advocate and Guide? We may furely expect to be heard, and to obtain our Suit; when this highly exalted Prince and Saviour takes upon himself to recommend us and our addresses both. If we be all Frailty and Unworthiness; yet be is all Merit and Sufficiency: and fince we fee his Merit testified by his Exaltation to the highest Glory; from this Honour, which is done our Interceffor, we should be encouraged with the fullest affurance of Success, the most lively hopes of Pardon and Acceptance. Only in the,

5. Fifth place, it ought to be remembered, that fince this his Intercession is not abfolute, but conditional, and requires in us an Evangelical Obedience, or conformity to the Precepts of the Gospel; we must all take care we frustrate not, as to our selves, nor hinder the gracious Effects of this his loving kindness towards us. We are none of us excluded, or thut out from his Favour. The Benefits of it are proposed to us all, without exception. But if we will exclude our felves, we have none but our felves to thank for the miseries that follow. The cause is wholly from our own prefumption or stupidity, not from any defect on the part of our Redeemer; as tho' he wanted Acceptance with the VOL. II. Father,

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SERM. Father, or were not able to fave; but meerly XVI. from our own refusal to comply with those equitable Terms; upon which Salvation is offered us, and an Interest in that Intercession,

which is made by Chrift.

Let us then no longer be our own enemies, nor render that Mediation, which in it felf is all-sufficient, infignificant to us. But let us be persuaded to be happy for Christ's sake, who has done and fuffered fo very much for ours. Let us fearch the Scriptures diligently; in which, we know, we have eternal life. From thence, as from a certain Rule, let us derive fuch Christian Principles, as may suffice to govern the whole course of our actions, and keep us steady in the ways of Righteoufness and Peace. Let us be always diligent to order our practice fuitably to fuch Principles: and because we are not sufficient for these things of our selves; let us apply to him for affiftance, who alone is able to support us, and chearfully make use of all those means of Grace, he has appointed in his Church. Above all,

duly frequent the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and expect the Benefits of our Saviour's Intercession, in a more especial manner, to be there conveyed. There have we Christ's crucified Body represented and set forth, as the Victim slain for the offences of Mankind. There do we beseech the Fa-

ther,

ther, thro' the Merits of the Son, and fo, as no SERM. where elfe, we shew forth the Sacrifice he XVI. made for us. We behold his Body broken, and his Blood shed for our Sins; we not only remember in our own minds, but we reprefent or make a solemn Memorial before God, of his Sufferings upon the Cross, and fo, in the just sense of that Passage of St. Paul, we do shew forth the Lord's death, till he come. So that this mysterious action of the Priest on earth, is but the lively emblem of the Function executed by our great High Priest in heaven: and whilst we worthily celebrate this holy Mystery, we do indeed concur with our Saviour's Intercession, which consists, as I have shewn, in the Representation of That Sacrifice he made for Sin; in the Oblation and Presentation of himself before the Father, as the Victim flain for us.

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Nor need we therefore doubt, whilst we receive the facred Symbols with our mouths, but that all the Benefits of our Saviour's Interceffion are therewith conveyed; provided the inward act of lively Faith do but accompany the outward act of oral Manducation; provided whilft we eat and drink the bodily elements, the external figns or fymbols, our minds be kept intent upon the thing fignified, the spiritual design or meaning, and made to apprehend those Benefits of Christ's Death, which are absent and invisible to sense. then have we conveyed the full Pardon and For-

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XVI. Supplies of Grace for future amendment, and a fure principle of happy Immortality: It being our Saviour's express promise to all, who do worthily and effectually communicate; He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, bath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

To Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all bonour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

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the inward set of lively Tails do but accompany the conventual of each Managers of covided which would be set of Managers of covided the continuents, the covided below intentionable that the following do the following of the covided that the following and that the covided that are also as and invited enterthance the covided that the forther was also as and invited enterthal for the forther have we conveyed that the Pardon and the A B as the Pardon and the A B as the Covided that the Pardon and the A B as the Covided that the Pardon and Tail Bardon and Tail B as the Covided that the Covided that

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SERMON XVII.

The Privilege of Christian Liberty explained.

GAL. v. 13, 14, 15.

to Liberty 800 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; Part 2 P. J. only use not liberty for an occasion to the slesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy felf.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

HE Galatians, or Gallogrecians, (fo SERM. called for their descent from a Colony XVII. of the Gauls settling in Greece,) had, by the preaching of St. Paul, been converted to the Faith of Christ. After which, there were certain Judaizing Teachers, who took the advantage of his absence, and by insisting on the necessity of Circumcision, and other ritual Observances appointed by the Law; and even pretending his Authority for what they faid, did so far bewitch these new Converts, and cast such a mist before their eyes, that they kept not to the Truth of the Gospel, but Y 3 defired

SERM. defired again to be in bondage to those weak XVII. and beggarly elements, from which the Son of God had come to redeem and set them free.

From hence, the Apostle found it necessary, not only to vindicate his former Doctrine, as communicated to him by immediate Revelation, and no way suggesting the continuance or obligation of the Mosaick Law; but likewise to back it with unanswerable arguments, that he might the easier recover them from that servitude, into which they had declined; and prevail with them to stand fast in that liberty,

wherewith Christ had made them free.

There was only this danger in the case; that mistaking the Privilege he had so strenuously asserted, they should imagine themselves liable to no restraints of Law, and instead of Liberty, should run into the most extravagant Licentiousness. This is, of the two, a baser and more abject kind of Slavery; to be the servants of corruption, as St. Peter expresses it: and therefore our Apostle took care to let them know, that between these two there lay a nobler and more generous kind of Servitude; so far from being destructive of their Christian Liberty, that it was indeed persective of it, and the only safe course they could steer between those dangerous extremes.

This is the purport of those words, which I have read to you for the Text; from whence

I shall be led to consider.

I. The Privilege or Benefit of Christians, SERM. which by their Religion they receive; and XVII. that is our Christian Liberty: for brethren, ye have been called unto Liberty.

II. The abuse of that invaluable Privilege, forbidden in these words: only use not liberty

for an occasion to the flesh.

III. The right way to exercise it, viz. with Charity: But by love serve one another. And this last he enforces by a twofold argument; the first of which is drawn from the Excellency and Benefit of such Charity; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self: the other from the mischief of the contrary; But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

I. FIRST, the great Privilege or Benefit of Christians, which by their Religion they receive; and that is our Christian Liberty: For Brethren, ye have been called unto

Liberty.

And this now being the Privilege, which the Author of our Salvation has procured for us, will be best explained by stating those several burdens, which he came to remove, and set us free from: And these are, the burden of Oppression, by usurped Authority; the burden of Duty, by the proper Lawgiver; and the burden of Punishment; upon Desect of our Obedience.

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SERM. I. First then, the first instance of our XVII. Christian Liberty, is the Freedom we enjoy from the Tyranny and Oppression of usurped Authority. The Devil, when he had drawn in Mankind to be partakers of his Crime, in disobeying the Law and Commandment of their God, set up a fort of rival Kingdom in opposition to his Maker; and challenged the Obedience of the human Race, as captives and fubjects to it. Their understanding was darkened by thick mists of Error: and tho' they got a new fense of Guilt and Shame, which belongs not to the innocent; yet they loft that relish of Virtue and Integrity; that folidity of Judgment, and clearness of Perception; that Aid and Succour of Divine Illumition, which were necessary to secure them against mistake. They contracted moreover a most stubborn crookedness and depravity of Will: having once broken the Command, they became perfectly averse to it; and instead of the Image of God, which had been stamped upon them, they bore the likeness of the Prince of darkness. Or had their Will been less stubborn and perverse; yet lastly, they wanted even the power to do well: the poifon of Sin had fuch malignant influence, that it destroyed those great abilities with which they were created; and forfeiting the communications of the Divine Spirit, did utterly disqualify them for the discharge of that Obedience, which might denominate them the ChilChildren or the Subjects of God. I need hard-SERM. ly add to this, by what arts the grand Apof-XVII. tate has endeavour'd to establish, and secure his Kingdom: How by ambiguous Oracles he has amused the World, and set up himself for the object of their Adoration; how, as the God of this world, he has blinded and perverted the minds of such as have submitted to him; how, as a roaring Lion, he walketh up and down continually, in search of whom he may devour.

This empire now of Sin, and Satan, the Scriptures represent as the most wretched Slavery and Bondage, Whosoever committeth Sin, fays our Saviour, is the fervant of Sin. * And they who indulge themselves in all manner of licentiousness, are in St. Peter's language, the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. + For this reason are they said to be taken captive by the Devil, and led away with divers lusts: and they, who are recover'd from this lamentable Apostacy, are said to be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; t to be deliver'd from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son; * to be rescued. lastly, from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the children of God.

^{*} Joh. viii. 34. + 2 Pet. ii. 19. ‡ Act. xxvi. 18.

^{*} Col. i. 13. | Rom. viii. 21.

SERM. This then is one main branch of Christi-XVII. an Liberty, that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Fesus, does, in this sense, free us from the law of Sin*. Our bleffed Saviour has fo brought life and immortality to light by his Gespel; he has given us so clear a Revelation of his Will; such notice of our Duty, and fuch motives to observe it; and he has appointed likewise such a succession of Preachers, to inculcate and explain it; that that ignorance, in which Satan had used to detain his Captives, can no longer be pleaded in excuse of our subjection to him, since this light of the glorious Gospel of Christ hath Shined unto us. And as thus, by his Prophetical Office, he has enlightned our Understandings; fo likewise, by his Priestly and Regal, he has fanctified our Wills; he has made fuch fatisfaction for the guilt of Sin; he has procured fuch supplies of Grace, to kill and mortify it in us; he has prescribed such Ordinances in his Church, for the conveyance of those rich supplies, for wiping off the stain of past Offences, and securing us the better, against future Disobedience; he has gain'd us such free access and admittance to the presence of God, to beg for growth and improvement in all Grace and Virtue; he ever lives himself to make fuch Intercession for us, and so to help our infirmities with the aid and affiftance of his bleffed Spirit; that however we may be impotent by Nature, and fold under Sin, we * Rom. vin. 2.

are yet mighty and powerful by Grace, and SERM. able to do all things thro' Christ, which strength—XVII. neth us. Henceforth there is nothing to obstruct our Liberty, but our own stubborn refusal to accept of it. And if we will obstinately remain under confinement, when we might be rescued from the Chains which have confined us; this can be no exception to that Liberty, which Christ has purchased; since he has freed us from all necessary restraints, and that which now detains us, is voluntarily chosen and affected by us.

The absolute conquest and extirpation of Sin, so as to have no feeds of Impurity remaining, no corruptions of Nature to disorder and folicit us; this indeed is fuch a state of perfect Freedom, as is no way fuited to our present mortal Condition; but expected as the confummation of our Liberty in the Life to come; when our Christian privileges shall be made compleat, and we shall reach to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. At present, it is a glorious Privilege, that we can break off the usurped empire and tyranny of Sin; that we can keep it from reigning or having dominion in our mortal body, tho' we cannot perfectly expel it thence, nor advance to a state of spotless and unfinning Purity. This is in the Scripture language to be free from Sin, to be no longer galled under it's yoak, nor brought in bondage to it. It rescues us from the slavery with

But

SERM. with which we were oppress'd; and is as an XVII. Earnest down in hand, of that more perfect Liberty, when we shall compleatly overcome the opposition that is made us, and finally

triumph over all our Enemies.

Being thus made free from fin, we become the fervants of righteousness. *. The condition of our nature will neither admit of Sovereignty nor Independency; but of neceffity we must submit ourselves to some Master and to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his fervants we are, to whom we obey; webether of fin unto death; or of obedi-

ence unto righteoufnefs. +

Nor does this subjection by any means deftroy the notion of Liberty. For the liberty of a Creature confifts not in a total exemption from all kind of restraint; but in a subjection to That only, which is suitable to it's nature; and a freedom from all fuch as is unreasonable and absurd. However slavish it may be to be aw'd by popular Tumults, or oppress'd by Tyrants and Usurpers; yet it is the furest mark of Liberty to submit to the government of wholfome Laws, and the wife administration of the proper Magistrate. Just so, when we submit to Satan and his instruments; when we dethrone our Reason, and fet Passion in it's room, we are then in a state of spiritual Bondage; we invert the very order of our Nature, and are brought under the power of a lawless Usurpation.

* Rom. vi. 18. + Ver. 16.

But if we give up our selves to be govern'd SERM.
by the Laws of God; if our Affections be no XVII.
otherwise suffer'd to influence the Will, than
as they are directed by Reason, and That
is farther enlighten'd and inform'd by Revelation; such service as this, is our most perfect Freedom, it is most agreeable to the condition of our Nature; it preserves our Faculties in their due Subordination, and renders Obedience to our proper Sovereign.

This therefore is that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free: and tho it is not to be doubted, but before his Incarnation, the Church had such communications of Divine Grace, as might greatly help it's members to mortify Sin, and to increase in Virtue; yet both their Knowledge was less, and their Affistance weaker; and whatever spiritual Privileges they enjoy'd, it was not by virtue of the Mosaick Despensation, as distinguish'd from the Gospel, but only as it prepared the way, and stood allied to it; it was in virtue of the Promife made of this all powerful Messiah, to repair the injuries done to Mankind by the fubtile devices of the grand Apostate, and rescue them from his outragious Tyranny. Nay, and let me add it, as the ward that do too see a windleson

2. Second instance of our Liberty, that those Ritual Observances are now abolish'd; and as we are freed from the burthen of Opporession by usurp'd authority; so likewise from

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SERM. fome burthen of Duty, by the proper Lawgiver. XVII. It was observ'd before, that our Liberty confifts not in an absolute freedom from restraint:

but in a regular subjection to wholsome Laws. impos'd upon us by competent Authority. And therefore it is not to be conceiv'd! that Christ, when he purchased us this glorious Liberty, should have taken off the obligation of those Laws, in the Obedience to which our Liberty consists. But when we remember, that the Church had other Laws before his coming; namely, certain typical and ritual Institutions, not passes'd of any intrinfick Worth or Goodness; so many in their number, that 'twas difficult to observe, and vet fo rigorously exacted, that 'twas dangerous to neglect them; when all this is confider'd, it will be easy to conclude, that befides that Duty, in the exercise whereof confifts our truest Liberty; there was moreover a yoak or burthen of Duty, which wanted to be remov'd; and which, whilst it continued, was a mark of Servitude. The inward act of Obedience was always good and acceptable, and extended alike to every part of Duty: but the outward observation of particular Rites and Ceremonies, did not necessarily arise out of that Principle of Obedience; but only as they were required by a positive Command

The ceremonial Law, no doubt, as every thing that comes from God, was founded in the t;

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the highest Wisdom; and admirably fitted SERM. for the use and advantage of that People, to XVII. whom it was prescribed. Their genius was low and earthy; and therefore most likely to be affected by a fensible and pompous Worship: and tho' there might be some danger of their resting in such outward Forms; yet there was due provision made against this consequence, by the instruction of Prophets, to raise their minds from those ritual appearances, to what was absent and invisible: It was moreover wisely order'd, that Mankind should be convinced of their impotence, and inability for perfect Obedience, by a Law, which required the most exact conformity to every punctilo; and supply'd no other remedy for their failures and defects, but fuch as by their need of frequent repetition, did amply testifie their own insufficiency to that purpose. Lastly, this Law was in such manner contriv'd, that it pointed out beforehand the Offices or Characters of the Meffiah; and thereby prepared it's diligent observers for the readier knowledge of his Person, and reception of his Doctrine.

But all these reasons, being purely temporary, the Institutions which were founded thereupon, must be mutable in themselves. And therefore however they might be necessary for a time, and suited to the occasions of the Church; yet we ought to esteem it as no mean Privilege, no despicable branch of Christian

SERM. Christian Liberty, that these old things are XVII. done away in Christ, and the term of their Obligation is long fince expired: fince Men's understandings have ripen'd to a juster sense of spiritual and eternal things, 'twas fit they should be taken off from those weak and beggarly elements, and taught a more reasonable fervice; fuch as was better fuited to their rational Nature, enlighten'd by the clearest Revelation, and affifted by Grace. When they faw their natural infirmity, and the impossibility of rendering perfect Obedience, without any defect; the Law had it's End in that particular, and it was time to be deliver'd from that yoak, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. * q visit

Once more, when the Messiah made his personal Appearance, to bring in everlasting righteousness, or justification by one perfect Sacrifice of himself, it was then time for the legal Sacrifices and Oblations to cease, as of no longer use; it was most reasonable for us to let go those shadows, and embrace the substance.

I might appeal to many passages of the old Testament, as well as new, to prove, that the Law of the Messiah was to free us from that yoak of ritual Observances, which Moses had ordain'd. And therefore when Christ tells us, that he came not to destroy the Law, but to sulfill it; we understand him not to teach

Christia:

the continuance of that outward Discipline, SERM. which both he and his Apostles, concurring XVII. with those former Writings, had declared should cease; but only his execution and enforcement of that Will of God, which is contain'd in the Law, and not subject to any alteration. With him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; and therefore his Will must be immutable and fix'd. But it is no argument of change in him, that he should in such manner prescribe or abrogate certain positive Institutions, as might suit best with the different circumstances of Times and Persons; and uniformly carry on those general defigns of his Law, which are of univerfal and eternal Obligation.

When therefore our Lord and Saviour, the holy and ever bleffed Jesus, took upon him to discharge the Offices of the Messiah, he not only fulfill'd the moral Law of Moses, (which deriv'd not it's first obligation from bis appointment, but was founded in the immutable Nature of God, and Reason of things,) by renewing and enforcing it in every part; but even the ceremonial too, by doing that in verity, which the Levitical Institutions could only ferve to figure out; by teaching and prescribing no other Doctrine or Laws, but what Moses and the Prophets had foretold he should prescribe and teach; by requiring that inward Purity and Renovation of mind, of which the Mojaick Shadows were meant to VOL. II.

SERM. be outward Signs or Expressions. Thus has XVII. Christ released us from that heavy yoak, not by destroying the Law, but by fulfilling it; by answering it's end or design, and not suffering one tittle of what was purposed by it to deceive or fail.

And let no one then object, that this is to place our Liberty in freedom from a yoak, to which we never have been subject. For the Church of God is to be confider'd as one Body or Society of Men throughout all ages, tho' in different stations, and capacities. During the time of the Law, it was in it's state of Non-age and Minority, and like the heir who differs nothing from a servant, tho' he be lord of all, was put into the hands of Tutors and Governors, and subject to the censure of a Schoolmaster. It was guided by external Rites and Ceremonies, and (as it were) led by the hand to the Knowledge and Doctrine of the Messiah. But when Christ appear'd in Person, it reached it's state of Maturity and Manhood; it was no longer to be fed with the Milk, or taught the Rudiments, of Children, but allow'd a more generous and easy discipline; as the Heir, when he is come to age, and intrusted with the management of his Estate. This therefore is another instance of that Liberty wherewith Christ bath made us free; Us namely, who are members of the Church, and as fuch; were formerly subject to a ceremonial yoak, which is now remov'd and taken SERM.
off from us. It remains for me, XVII.

3. Thirdly, to confider it in respect of that burthen of Punishment, which was to be inflicted in defect of our Obedience. From the beginning of the Creation, the penalty annex'd to the Transgression of the Law was death; - an utter exclusion from the favour of God; - a forfeiture of those Privileges, which were design'd us in the State of Innocence; and subjection to eternal Mifery. The Law of Moses was so far from rescuing from this sentence of Death, that it rather shew'd how unavoidably we were exposed to it; it added strength and pungency to that Sin, which is the sting of death; it shew'd us how far we had fallen short of our Duty, and how justwas the Vengeance we MICHELL IN CLARES CHARLY IN SEVERE

The Sins of Pride or Presumption, which were done in direct defiance of that Law, it punished with certain Death: and if it allow'd of Commutations in less aggravated Cases; if it accepted of Atonements for legal Pollutions, or the slips of human Frailty; yet the nature of the Sacrifices it prescribed was such, as shew'd they could have no Virtue of their own to expiate the guilt of Sin, however they restored the Sinner to external Privileges; but must, without some farther Expiation, leave him still liable to the Vengeance of God. For what proportion is there

SERM between the Sin of a Man, and the Life of a XVII. Beast? or how shou'd it be imagin'd, that the blood of Bulls and Goats should blot out the Transgressions of reasonable Creatures, and prevail with the righteous Judge of all the Earth, for Pardon and Forgiveness?

But when the Lamb of God appear'd to take away the Sins of the world; when the second Person of the eternal and ever blessed Trinity took on him the form of a Servant; and came in the likeness of sinful Flesh, to avert that Vengeance which was due to us, by suffering in our stead; he quickly proclaim'd deliverance to the captives of Satan; he purchased us such persect Liberty, and so surely rescued us from that Punishment, to which the Law exposed us, that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; who by being made a Curse and Sin for them, has taken away the Curse of the Law.

'Tis true, as the conquest of Sin cannot in this life be compleat and absolute; so neither is our exemption from Punishment total and entire. The Weaknesses of human nature are too many to be concealed; and too evidently owing to our first Parents Disobedience, to escape being considered under the notion of Punishment. They are oftentimes increased and multiplied by the repeated Transgressions and Wickedness of men. They bring us at last down to the Chambers of Death, and cause an utter separation between Soul

Soul and Body. Here then is the unhappy SER Mfruit of the Apostacy of man! Here is the XVII.
execution of that primary sentence against
Sin: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou
shalt surely die! And were there no Advantage to be made by these Infelicities of nature,
were we always to remain under that sentence of Death; then vain indeed would be
our boasting of Christian Liberty; whilst we
received the hire of Slaves, and bore the
surest marks of the most wosul Bondage.

But when we remember, that the Evils we at present suffer, are but the Trials of our Virtue, and made to work together for good to them that love God; that even Death itself is to them the Gate of Life, and opens them an entrance into endless Felicity; this shews how Christ has freed us from the Punishment of Sin, and excites us to cry out with the Apostle, O death, where is thy sling? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whilst our struggling and conflict with Sin endures, it is no wonder if we feel some of the effects of Sin; if we sustain some part of the Punishment denounced against it. But when we shall be delivered from this body of Death, when our state of Trial shall be over, and this mortal shall put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is writ-

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SERM. ten, Death is fivallowed up in victory; then XVII. shall we be released at once from Sin and Misery, and enjoy without intermission those rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right

band, and last for evermore.

So that what was faid before of the Yewish Dispensation, in respect of the Gospel, may here be repeated of the present Condition of the Church, in comparison of that glory which shall bereafter be revealed; that it is now in its state of Non-age and Minority, we fee but in part, and we enjoy in part; but when it reaches to its state of Perfection and Maturity, then shall the Happiness of its Members be compleat, and that which is in part only shall be done away. The Privileges however, which we enjoy at prefent, are an encouraging earnest of this future Felicity; and instead of that Spirit of bondage, which would ingenerate a Principle of Fear, they supply us with the Spirit of adoption, and beget in us a hope full of Immortality.

Thus under Three Particulars, I have explained to you the nature of that Liberty, which is mentioned in the Text, as the great Privilege or Benefit of our Religion; for brethren ye have been called unto liberty. From

hence learn we in the,

1. First place, to be duly thankful to the Author of this great Salvation, who has thus delivered us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The change

change of the Shadows and the Ceremonies of SERM. the Law, for that Truth and Substance, which XVII. we perceive under the Gospel, is a Privilege greatly to be valued; as calling us to a Service more reasonable in itself, and more easy to us, as well as conducing to our greater improvement. But it demands our gratitude in a higher degree, that the Slavery of Sin is broken and abolished; that the faculties of our Minds, which had been shamefully inverted, are restored to their proper regiment and subordination to each other; that our Understanding is enlightened and taught the loveliness of Virtue, our Affections directed and disposed to Good, and our Will invigorated from above, and enabled to proceed accordingly: that finally, we are released from the Punishment of Sin, and if we have not yet attained the end of our faith, we have however a fure prospect of eternal Salvation, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

2. Secondly, let us be careful to affert and maintain this glorious Privilege, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. If the son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed. But whilst he offers this Freedom as a Privilege, he will never impose it as a Burden; he will not support us in it whether we will or no; but if we chuse to relapse into our former Bondage; we must e'en wear the Chains we have so rashly taken

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XVII. Master gives. It is not our admission to the outward Privileges of the Church of Christ, which will set us free from the usurped Empire and Tyranny of Sin; unless we be careful to apply them to those spiritual Purposes for which they were designed: that as we have named the name of Christ, we may likewise depart from all iniquity; that being made free from sin, we may become the servants of righteousness; and even he that thinketh he standard, may yet be cautious and circumspect, and take good heed to himself, lest at any time he should hereafter fall.

3. Thirdly, let us more especially beware, that we mistake not the nature of this Christian Liberty; nor under pretence of exemption from Servitude, shake off the Obligation of those Laws, which are enacted by a competent Authority, whether in Ecclesiaftical or Civil Matters; much less refuse our Obedience to the Laws of God, and reckon all the Tyes of Duty to be cancelled and diffolved. For this would most effectually destroy that Liberty we pretend to affert, and which has been shewn to consist in the reasonable Service of our Maker, and Subjection to his Laws. It would really bring us into that Bondage we pretend to disclaim; and under the notion of Liberty or Freedom from it, would render us the very fervants of corruption. But these considerations do more

more properly relate to that Abuse of this SERM. invaluable Privilege, which is forbidden by XVII. the Apostle in these words, only use not liberty for an occasion to the sless. That was what I proposed for the SECOND general Head of my Discourse; but must now be reserved to some other opportunity.

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

feet, while and deep our as applied, then

we extinves it on any teach that is fainly to proper is our depine, to identify our bials and groperation so all that he was excellently focust thangs are countries in the great Author of store to wood propers, and here mader viant focust to grood propers; one way for delay, we had intended to the fair of the want focus and train the real of tongs the carriers and continue to what focus and continue the following the real of tongs the carriers and the real of tongs the carriers and the feet of tongs the carriers and the feet defends and as a continue to defends and the feet defends and the feet defends and the feet that the

Striker (* 1700) is the respect and dispelled at XVIII., Johnson descendents

eller to be not confined on of exother.

SERMON XVIII.

The Abuses of Christian Liberty exposed.

GAL. v. 13, 14, 15.

For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the slesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take beed that ye be not confumed one of another.

SERM. SUCH is the temper and disposition of XVIII. Sallen and degenerate man, so ready are we at invention of any thing that is sinful, so prone is our genius, so strong our biass and propension to ill, that how excellently soever all things are contrived by the great Author of the universe, and how subservient soever to good purposes; one way or other, we find means to pervert the gracious Design of them, and turn them to what shape we please. Thus the best of things have been abused; God's Word has been construed to serve finister designs; and his Grace has been turned into

into lasciviousness: Christ's Death has been SERM. urged as a reason for Security, his Religion XVIII. has been made a cloak of Maliciousness, and Reformation has been pleaded in excuse of Schism.

No wonder then, if Liberty among the rest should be abused, a thing so easily perverted; and when perverted, so indulgent to all forts of Wickedness. Against this St. Peter cautions us when he fays, we should be—as free, and not using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God*. And St. Paul, to the same purpose, in the Text advises, that we use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, i. e. that we pretend not Liberty, when we follow the course of our own fleshly Lusts and malicious Appetite; that we turn not the grace of God into lasciviousness (as St. Jude expresses it +,) nor Christian Liberty into unchristian Licentiousness. This therefore; after having already explained to you in a former Discourse the nature of this Christian Privilege, that it consists, not only in a Freedom from the ceremonial Institutions of the Law of Moses; but likewise from the Tyranny of Sin and Satan; from the present Slavery of their Dominion, and from future Punishment: This, will properly follow in the ensuing Discourse, as the Subject of the

II. SECOND General Head I had proposed, namely the Abuse of that invaluable Privilege,

^{* 1} Pet. ii. 16.

[†] Jude ver. 4.

SERM. which the Apostle has forbidden us in these XVIII. words, only use not liberty for an occasion to the

A flesh.

Now as Virtue is determined by the Moralists to lie in the middle between two extremes; so this Doctrine of Liberty is liable to be abused in two methods widely different, either in excess or defect. The former is the more usual and more dangerous Abuse, which runs men into many extravagancies, and under pretence of Liberty, would introduce the

utmost Disorder. But the,

1. First instance I shall mention, belongs rather to the other class, and would abridge our Liberty, by imposing that burden of external and ritual Observances, which our most merciful Redeemer came to relieve and abrogate. There was a time, upon the first Publication of the Gospel, whilst the Yews were indulged in the observance of those Rites, to which their education had attached them; and in this they were complied with by some who were duly fensible, that the obligation to them had ceased. Timothy was circumcised by St. Paul, as being the son of a Fewes, tho' his father were a Greek *. And the Apostle purified himself as men under a vow, to give proof, that be walked orderly and kept the law +. But as for the Gentiles which believed, they were directed to observe no such thing; except only in those instances, which were thought

^{*} Acts xvi. 1, 3. + Chap. xxi. 26.

to be prescribed before the Law, and given to SERM. the Sons of Noah: And therefore when St. XVIII. Paul had Titus with him at Jerusalem, who was a Gentile Convert, and not fprung from the Jews; neither he, nor the Men of reputation with whom he confulted, compelled him to be circumcifed, or obey the ritual

Injunctions of the Law of Moses I

Much less were any allow'd to consider them as necessary in themselves, or any real cause of justification before God. And therefore, if any infifted upon fuch necessity, that except they were circumcifed after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved, * they are called false brethren by the Apostle, who came to fpy out the liberty which they had in Christ Tefus, that they might bring them into bondage+ For which reason when St. Peter, by his doubling and diffimulation in this matter, gave but too much countenance to that Opinion; he was openly contradicted by St. Paul, and censured for his Practice. 1 Nay when the Galatians were submitting themselves to the bondage of these weak and beggarly elements; the Apostle was in fear, that the labour he had bestowed upon them, wou'd be all in vain; | and declared that if they were circumcifed under this notion of it's necessity, Christ Should profit them nothing.* The reason was evident, because their sub-1 Gal. ii. 1, 2, 3, * Acts xv. 1. + Gal. ii. 4. 1 Verf. 11, &c. | iv. 9, 11. * v. 2, &c.

mission `

SERM. mission to that Rite was a virtual engagement XVIII. for the Observance of the whole Law. And if they fell short of their Engagement, they had no reason to complain that they fell short of Pardon: They had chosen this method of Justification by the Law, and thereby they had fallen from the Grace of Christ, and sought not to be justified thro' Faith in him.

From this abolition then of the Mofaick Ceremonies, it is easy to collect, that the Worship of the Gospel was to be pure and rational and whilft thefe ancient Rites were done away for want of an intrinfick Worth and Goodness 'twould be abford to think there fhould any new ones be appointed in their room, of the same useless and unprofitable nature. Instead of the Letter and outward Form of ceremonial Worthip, there fucceeds a more spiritual and reasonable Service; confifting principally of that inward Change and Disposition of mind, which those outward Ceremonies did but faintly express or figure out. If therefore there be any under this purer Dispensation, who require our Obedience to the Molaick or other Ceremonies ordain'd by Men, in fuch number or manner, as to weaken the Gospel, and obscure it's force; to abate the power of it's spiritual Precepts, and transfer our regard from the inward Life and Spirit of Religion, to outward Pomp, and Oftentation; if they shall infift upon

upon them, as necessary in themselves, or SERM. suppose any end of Religion to be serv'd by a XVIII. meer external observance, or regard to them; these Men become abusers of our Christian Freedom, by lessening and abridging it, and like those Judaizers already mention'd at Jerusalem, they come to spy out our liberty,

and strive to bring us into bondage.

The Offences of the Church of Rome, in this particular, are fo gross and obvious that 'tis difficult to forbear the application. To those idolatrous Rites, which are directly, and in themselves unlawful, they have added fuch a multitude of other Ceremonies, as cannot but exceedingly take off from the real Energy and Power of Religion; and yet they infift on them, with such rigorous exactness, as if the whole Life and Spirit of Religion lay in them. So that whilft these things are the principal matter of their care and fludy, Christianity is almost dwindled, among them, into Farce and Foppery, the fewish yoak is aggravated, or made heavier by them, and the word of God it self is made of none effect by their Traditions. And yet, if these are to be blamed, as offenders against Christian Liberty, for this stiff and tenacious adherence to unnecessary Rites; Those are no less culpable in the

2. Second place, who by an inconfistent zeal for Liberty, would stretch their Privilege beyond it's real design, and resuse to observe those

SERM, those solemn Forms and Usages, which for XVIII. the take of decency and order, have been deliberately fettled by a competent Authority. There is no less Superstition, no less Restraint of Liberty in a stiff opposition to all forts of Ceremonies, than there is in the over valuing and undue manner of prescribing them.

> Whatever Inferences may be drawn from the Abolition of the ceremonial Law, for the Unlawfulness of such Observances, as either in their tendency or number do cherish Superstition, and obscure Gospel Truths; yet this can never amount to an exclusion of all external Rites and Ceremenies in Divine Worship. Alas! this is impossible; the Principles of Matter and Form require, that our Bodies should be in some posture; and the nature of a publick Assembly implies the necessity of Time and Place for our affembling together. Or if the thing were possible, yet the importance of Divine Worship, requires Reverence from each particular Person, and Uniformity in the whole Congregation; that with one mouth, as well as one heart, in Voice and Body, as well as Soul and Spirit, we may fet forth the Praises, or implore the Favour of our God.

> It would be but an odd commendation of the Gospel, to suppose, that all the outward beauty of Holiness were set aside by it; and that besides that fervor of mind, which is in-

visible.

wishle, it retains nothing of that appearing SERM. Grace and Comeliness, which might endear XVIII. and recommend it. Nay, that very fervor of mind would be liable to just suspicious, which should burn all within, and not break out in such expressions of Reverence and Devotion, as might attest or give witness to it's

Sincerity.

But we need not argue only from the Reafon of the Cafe. Our bleffed Saviour, by making fuch difference of Persons, as nature had not made; by choosing some out from among the rest, to bear Office in his Church, and minister in holy Things; by appointing the use of Water with a certain Form of words, for the incorporation of new Members into his mystical Body; by prescribing the Elements of Bread and Wine, to be offer'd and confumed in memory of his Death, until his coming again: I fay, he has hereby taught us, it could never be his meaning, that all ritual Religion should be entirely abolish'd; but rather, that something of this kind was necessary to the constitution and continuance of his Church.

And tho' he proceeded not minutely to describe, what gesture or habits, time or place, should be used for publick Worship; yet we find it afterwards among the Precepts of the new Revelation, that all things should be done decently and in order, and to edification: From whence it evidently follows, Vol. II.

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SERM. that the Honour of Religion is to be confulted, XVIII. and the Advantage of it's Votaries, by the preference of some outward Usages before others, and the performance of our Worship, in such manner as may best suit the nature of the thing, and as well assist our Devotion, as

express and recommend it.

Our opinion of these Matters, is so subject to change and alteration, that twould be unreasonable to expect any constant and immutable Rule to settle and determine em. That which is most decent and comely in one Age or Country, may happen to be most slovenly and indecent in another. Prostration was, of old, the Custom of the East; but I greatly suspect, if any should use it among us, twould lose much of that Decency and Reverence it was then thought to express.

For this reason, however, the observance of some Ceremonies may be necessarily included in the notion of publick Worship; yet the Apostles have no where tyed us down to such particular Ceremonies, but have only couched our Duty under general Rules; not leaving it to every one to act as his own humour directs: (That would create Confusion instead of Uniformity;) but referring it to the Bishops and Governors of the Church, to consider the different circumstances of time and place, and resolve upon such stated Rites and Ceremonies, as in their judgment shall be most conducing to Order and to Edification.

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If they should chance to be mistaken in SERM. their Judgment, and prescribe such Usages XVIII. as are less convenient; yet still if there be nothing in them finful, or involving those who observe them, in the breach of some Law; the Error is entirely their own; and it is our Duty to submit and acquiesce ; as preferring the publick Peace and Order of the Church, to any other Expediency that can be proposed. This is, among other things, included in that general Precept, to obey them that have the rule over us, and to submit ourselves; which implies, that Christ has certain Substitutes in his Kingdom, to govern in his absence, whom the rest of his subjects are bound in Duty to observe, as invested with his Authority.

And however it may be faid of each particular Ceremony, whilst undetermin'd, that it is perfectly indifferent, and has nothing in it's own nature to demand our Observance; yet when once it is settled by such competent Authority, the use of it becomes necessary, in point of Obedience; and it is no branch of Christian Liberty, to set us free from Obligations so much to our advantage.

But we may the less wonder, if the name of Liberty be thus abused, when its remember'd.

the pretence for disclaiming the right of civil Authority; for taking away all distinction of Orders and Degrees; for cancelling the Rights

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SERM. and Properties of Men, and letting all upon XVIII. a level; or even for destroying out of the - World, the enemies of the Lord; and bestowing the Earth, as the inheritance of the Saints, under the fole Guidance and Command of Jefus. 101 01 : maintain ministran position

There was, we find, a mischiveous Error, which very early crept into the Church; and perhaps owed it's original to the false expectations of the Jews, from their Mestiah, that the Disciples of Christ were free from the Restraints of Government; no longer bound to pay Obedience to those Masters, whom they ferv'd before their Conversion, but released from all their Obligations and Engagements. On the contrary, it had been taught by fefus, that his Kingdom is not of this World; that it had no fecular Views, nor fought to support it self by the Arm of Flesh; and therefore could have no occasion to erect it's glory upon the ruins of the Kingdoms of the Earth. This his Apostles afterwards found it necessary, more largely to inculcate and enforce; that as many servants as were under the yoak, should count their own masters worthy of all honour : and even if those Masters were believers themselves, they should not therefore despise them, under the notion of Brethren, or Persons made equal to 'em in Christ; but rather do 'em service, because they were faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit: on he

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nefit: * that the' 'tis true, Christ, by his Reli-SERM. gion, had made them free; yet they should XVIII. not use their Liberty, for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God; continuing still to bonour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and bonour the king; to submit to him as supreme, and to those subordinate governors that were fent by him; to be subject to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; + - that they should render unto all their dues, tribute to whom tribute was due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; bonour to whom bonour; I and every man (in short,) abide in the same calling suberein be was called, or at first conyerted to the Faith of Christ; so that even tho' converted in a state of Servitude, he should not care or be greatly folicitous about it.

By all this, they manifeftly taught 'em, that their conversion to Christianity diffolved not any of their civil Ties and Obligations: but they were to look upon themselves as subject to the same Laws and Discipline in civil Matters after their Conversion, as they had been before; for that Christianity aim'd not at the subversion of States or alteration of Property; but left Men in these respects to their former Constitutions, and the future discretion of their Governore. And therefore if any Man should teach otherwise, and advance any

Tim vi. 1, 2. + 1 Pet. ii, 13, &c. 1 Rom. xiii. 7. 1 Cor. vii. 20. A a 3

frantick

SERM frantick scheme of Liberty, in opposition to XVIII. this, the Apostle declares him to be proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, finise railings, evil surmisings, perwerfe disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth supposing that gain is goddiness.

When therefore we see the same Principles reviv'd by modern Levellers, Anabaptifus, Fifth-monardoy Men, and such like will Enthusiasts, the same pretences to Liberty, and the Privilege of Saints; or perhaps a little onlarged with professions of submitting to King felius, and to no one else; we have the same reply to make, which was made of old by the Apostles of Christ, to the first Patrons of such abominable Errors; that the Christian Religion aims not to confound the Rights of Men, and overturn the Governments of the World; but rather to establish them upon a sure and lasting Basis, by requiring subjection of it's Votaries, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sakes

And indeed to aim at the Diffelution of all civil Government, is such a wild and fantastick scheme of Liberty, as wou'd render every Man a Tyrant over others, or a slave under them. The Hebrew Commonwealth was never so disorder'd, as in those times of Confusion, when there was no king in Israel; but every Man was left to pursue the Pollies of his own Imagination, and do what was right in

* 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.

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his own eyes. There is such extravagance SERM. and malice in the Hearts of Men, as all the XVIII. Restraints of Government are found little enough to keep in order: and should we then give up the only security we have against them, and for sear of a generous Subjection to those, who would protect and defend us, put on the most galling yoak of Slavery, under them who would ruin and destroy us?

There can be little hopes of success, when we are arguing with them, who are spur'd on by such Enthusiastick notions, as were not built in the Original, upon any rational deductions; but form'd only in the imagination of a crazy Brain, and supported by some wild prospects of advantage from them. But it may have this good effect, to convince Men of cooler Heads, and more solid Judgments, of the solly and extravagance of their proceedings. And yet if their notions be sollish and extravagant, and an intolerable abuse of Christian Liberty; what shall we then say to those abandon'd Libertines, who have the assurance in the

A. Fourth place, to plead this Privilege, as an exemption even from the Laws of God; who protend that Christ has so compleatly satisfied the rigour of the Law, as to leave his Plest liable to no restraints, nor chargeable with any enormities; and from thence infer the most absolute and uncontroul dicense to execute the dictates of their own Will, with-

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SERM, out regard to any rules of Duty; or terrors XVIII. of a future Punishment?

This is the most dangerous abuse of Liberty, that can possibly be made; and against it the Apostles found it necessary to provide with the utmost disigence and caution. To this end, they instruct us, that our Christian Freedom is so far from dissolving the Obligation of virtuous and good Laws, that it blinds them closer down upon us, and even consists in our imitating the Divine Perfections, and yielding our selves the servants of righteousness. Whilst therefore we disclaim, "that service which is perfect freedom," of course we forseit our Liberty under the notion of securing it, we become the Vassals of Satan, and Servants of Corruption.

This is That abuse which St. Paul more particularly aim'd at in the words of the Text, when he cautions us against using this Liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Accordingly he proceeds to take notice, in the Verses following, how the rational Principle is sometimes oppress'd and overruled, by the lustings of the Flesh, or carnal Appetite; how the works of the flesh do most widely separate us from the Love of God, and will therefore exclude us from the Glories of his Kingdom; how 'tis the business of the Christian Religion, to fet us free from the entanglement and influence of so noxious a Principle, to crucifie the flesh with the affections and hifts, to enable us to bring forth that fruit of the censure of any Law; and in the possession XVIII. whereof, for that very reason, we should

place our truest Liberty mono read with a popular

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Tis true indeed, that between Vice and Virtue there is a certain middle space, of an indifferent nature, in which we may fitly indulge ourselves a decent Liberty. Thus particularly with respect to those good Creatures. which the Divine Providence has appointed for the Sustenance of Man; we know that God has given us a Charter of Freedom to make use of them, not only for necessity but delight: that the we are forbidden fuch exorbitant use of them, as would consume too much of our Time, impair our Health, or render us unfit for the Duties of our Station; yet we are not confined to fuch a fcanty Portion, as would just answer the necesfities of Nature; but are allow'd, within a moderate compass, even to gratifie our Senses, and make them minister to our delight and fatisfaction. But if we go beyond that moderate compass, and decline to Vice in either extream, 'twill be in vain to plead our Christian Privilege in excuse of our Enormity: fince we have no license granted us for fuch Excesses; nor can be guilty of them, whilst we contain ourselves within the Rules of Liberty: See got of or many whereas that

Nay, farther, fince the utmost Boundaries of that Liberty cannot, with any exactness, be stated

SERM flated and determined, for as to fay, bitberte XVIII, may'A thou come, and no farther, to name which is the first glass that leads to Drunkennels, or which the first morfel that denominates Mon Gluttons; it will highly become us to fet bounds to our felves; to make fure that we never go farther than we ought, by not going fo far indeed as we are fure we might: to be extreamly cautious (inel) of venturing too near the edge of Liberty and choose rather to deny ourselves some part of it, than run the hazard of exceeding it. The chief end which Nature proposes by our Food, is the health and refreshment of the Body. To these therefore; should we have a principal regard, and not too wantonly fludy to gratify the Palate, left we run at last to Luxury, if not to Excess. son san san san

Nor let us think; when we keep clear from all vicious Indulgences, that we have no other Restriction to observe, in the exercise of Christian Liberty. For,

5. Fifthly, it is the last Abuse I shall mention of that high Privilege, when it alledged for the use or practice of such things as, tho lawful in themselves, do yet become the occasion of Scandal or Offence to others. It is, no doubt, an error in the other extreme, and an unreasonable abridgment of Christian Liberty, for any to reproach or censure us as sinners, upon the account of such things as are allowable. And therefore it is an excellent

edient Rule, which is preferibed by the Apole Serve tle; in the date of meatsy that as he that eateth XVIII. oughtings to defpife bim that eateth not; has neither thould be that estably not, judge bini that eaceth#: the should not prefume to fet cierabinos rone, waed mas moininto mito eith on all who differ from him fas fonners and pros phane, But forafmuch As this is often the effect of weakness and homen frailty; if will become us to condescend a little, and conform our felwes too their marrower apprehenfions. Wechat are fir day fasthe Apostile argues) ought to bear the infirmities of the week, and not to pleafe our felices o bot fridy every one, how to pleafe his weighbourg in by thus flooping to his weaker judgment, firmber good toedifications This Rule it is observable, takes place only in those matters which are left indiffer rene and are, as fuch, the proper field wherein to exercise our Christian Liberty. In all other matters, which are either necessary in their dwg nature or made fo by the interpolitions of Superior Authority; we have no room to condescend to the humours of our brethren; we are not at liberty to alterious behaviour for fear of giving them offence. For the Law of foundal is the low of Rule that can be offered to direct dur practice; and therefore it can never be fufficient to fet afide any prior Obligation, or dispense with those Laws, which are either founded in the Reason † Chap. xv. t, 2. Rom, xiv. 3.

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XVIII. command of those, who have right to govern
and controll us. The Scandal in such cases
is taken, but not given and tho we should
use all prudent care to set our matters in a
clear light; yet we may not submit to any
compliance inconsistent with our Duty; for
that were a direct Breach or Transgression of
the Divine Law, and not the Exercise of

Obristian Liberty: Preschabella ber Sentone

But when there is no necessity in the nature of the thing to bind us up, nor any deeision of superior Authority; it will then become, us to confider the opinions and Infirmities of others; to abstain from all appearance of evil , as well as from that which is evil in it felf; to take care that even our good may not be evil spoken of to nor our liberty become a flumbling block, or an occasion of falling, to them that are weak . For the' all things may be lawful for us, yet all things are not expedient; and why not expedient, the Apostle explains, because they edifie not ||. So that however agreeable such practice may be to our own inclination, or however indifferent and allowable in it felf, yet to long as 'tis ill reported of by other people, it will become us to deny our felves for their edification; left by finning against the brethren, and wounding their weak conscience, we be found even to fin

Thef. v. 22. + Rom. xiv, 16. Ti Car. viii. 9. | Chap x. 23, | against

against Christ. Wherefore (as the Apostle SERM. speaks) if meat make my brother to offend, IXVIII. will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*. And again, It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is

offended, or is made weak +.

It may perhaps be somewhat difficult, to state exactly the extent and obligation of this law of Scandal; or diffinguish clearly between capriciousness of Humour, and religious Scrupulofity. But in general, 'tis manifeftly founded on that Law of Charity, which requires us to confult the Benefit of others, and which the Apostle proposes in the Text, as the proper measure of our Christian Liberty. But by love ferve one another. Which falling under the THIRD General Head proposed, must now be referved for the Subject of another Discourse. Now to God the Father, God the explained one weener charge and berinights

-x 2 27 10 4 1 Cor. viii. 12, 13, 1 A Rom. xiv. 21.

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against Christ. Wherefore (as the Apolle 6 t R Mr. SERMON XIX.

make my brother to offend . And again, it i Christian Liberty to be governed by Chriffian Charity anid' you offended, or is made week

flate exactly the extent and obligation of this aw of Scaptathor offinguid Acoly between

It may perhaps be forme

For, breebren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love ferve one another. I had no he

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou Thalt love thy neighbour as thy

But if ye bite and devour one another, take beed that ye be not confirmed one of another. now percented for the

SERM. Thave already, in two former Diffeourles, explained the Nature, and experied the XIX. Abuses of Christian Liberty. And from what was faid on that occasion, it is evident, that this Privilege implies not an Exemption from the Restraints of Government and Laws; but rather an uniform subjection to the Authority of the supreme Lawgiver, and a removal of all those Impediments, which would hinder us from doing him that Service which is perfect Freedom. Since therefore his Law (to carry this argument a little farther) requires of us mutual Love and Charity; from hence

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it may appear, that our Christian Liberty, con-SERM. fisting in Obedience to this Law, does really XIX. bind us under a kind of Restraint or Servitude to one another. This therefore, the Apostle proposes, and I proceed now, in order, to consider, under the

III. THIRD General Head, as the proper measure of our Privilege, the right way to exercise our Christian Liberty: But by love

ferve one another. World I hould be mened but

The Service of God is our most perfect Freedom; and whilft his Law requires the Service of Love to one another; This can be no real Abridgment of our Liberty, but turns our mutual Services into acts of Obedience to him. To make open professions of Esteem and Love, when there is no such Principle at bottom, may indeed be difficult and uneafy, a heavy Noke and Burden: But then, this has nothing to do with Christian Liberty, or Christian Duty; it is no real Service of Love or Christian Sympathy, no act of Obedience to the Law of God. Tis otherwise, where that Principle is settled in good earnest; there the outward expressions will naturally follow: To far from being dif-Widult, they will be pleafant and agreeable; fo far from an ungenerous and flavish Bondage, that our Duty in reality will the our mighty Privilege. Da ovil edw slock of boath

This, the Apostle shows in the Text, by two very substantial Argon ents, the forfund which

SERM. which is drawn from the Excellence and XIX. Benefit of fuch charitable Services: for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self: the other from those contrary mischiefs, which we shall hereby escape: But if ye bite and devour one another, take beed that ye be not consumed one of another.

1. First then, I begin with the Excellence and Benefit of fuch Charity: for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy felf. And there are three things upon this Subject, which more particularly want to be explained, namely,

(1.) The Object of this Charity, and that is our neighbour; Thou shalt love thy

neighbour.

(2.) The Measure of it, and that is our felves; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy

felf in And, is at a said sowed side and

(3.) The End of it, and that is the fulfilling of the Law; for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in This; Thou Shalt love thy neighbour as thy felf. And,

(1.) First then, the first thing here confiderable is the Object of this Charity, and that is our neighbour; Thou shalt love thy

fo far brom an ungenerous see the model of The usual notion of a neighbour is confined to those who live near us; and as near or distant are relatively understood; so in proportion to the matter we are speaking of, the the notion of Neighbourhood will be more SERM. contracted or enlarged. When we are XIX. speaking of Kingdoms, and large divisions of the Earth; those of France and Holland, (for instance) and other Western Countries, may be reckon'd in our Neighbourhood; in comparison of Persia and China, which are at greater distance. But when we are speaking of places of less compass, it may be confined to the adjoining Counties or Villages, or perhaps to a few Streets or Houses round about us. In the Precept before us, the term is used in a more absolute Sense, and not limited by any of these Considerations. For no one ever pretended that our Love should be confined meerly by the bounds of Distance; or that it should be worthy of a reasonable nature, to measure out Friendship by the Scale of Miles.

But yet as Neighbourhood, even in this acceptation, is a usual occasion for contracting Friendships and Intimacies of a stricter kind, from hence the Jews took occasion to affix a Limitation in this matter, that their Friendship should extend only to those of their own Nation and Religion, or such as by some particular Friendship and Alliance stood related to them; whilst they were allowed to neglect and overlook all Mankind besides, or even to treat them with Indignity and Scorn. From hence arose among them, that proverbial Expression, thou shalt love thy neighbour, Vol. II. B b

SERM, and bate thine enemy*. They thought there XIX, could be no Obligation to esteem and value those, who should maliciously endeavour to work their Hurt and Prejudice. Nay, tho they were quiet, and not concern'd in any Practices against them, they had a secret contempt of all the Gentile World; and whilst they valued themselves as the Posterity of Abraham, they disdain'd even to converse

with those of any other Nation.

This Narrowness of spirit, and Confinement of their love, our bleffed Saviour reprehended in his Sermon on the Mount; where he taught them, that their bitterest Enemies were not to be excluded from their brotherly Affection; and fet before them the Divine example to that purpose, in pouring out Benefits on the most unworthy and ungrateful. I fay unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curfe you, do good to them that bate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his fun to rife on the evil, and on the good; and fendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust. + And to shew that even such are not excluded from the religious notion of neighbourhood; he elsewhere gives an account of a Samaritan's kindness to a Jew in distress, which were People at utmost Enmity and Variance with each other; and thereby a full Solution of

* Mat. v. 43. + Mat. v. 44, 45.

the Lawyer's question, who enquired into SERM. the extent of that Relation. The refult then XIX. of the Matter is this, that our inward principle of Charity must be universal, not bounded by any confiderations of Kindred, Sect, or Country; but extending itself to the whole Race of Mankind; as confidering, that we have all one Father, that one God bath created ust, and made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth t. But for as much as, neither our Knowledge nor Abilities can reach to make outward expressions of this Love to every individual; it is fufficient that that Disposition, which is universal in itself, be actually exerted in good Offices, to those who shall fall within the Verge of our Notice or Acquaintance. These then, be they Natives or Foreigners, be they Enemies or Friends; These are in the Christian Sense our Neighbours, so earnestly recommended to our Care and Concern. And the all that part of Mankind, which we have never feen or heard of, or to whom we have no proper opportunities to communicate our good Will, must be of course excluded from this notion of Neighbourhood; yet this is only by accident: and fince the Principle is universal, if any of them should hereafter fall within our Notice or Acquaintance; then they will be our Neighbours too, and boffeld too + Mal. ii; to. 1 Act. xvii. 26.

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SERM. the expressions of our Kindness must extend XIX. to them.

There is indeed some difference to be made between them; and where we cannot alike express our Benevolence to all, there are various Circumstances fit to be consider'd, in order to determine where it is due. The Necessities or Merit of the Men, or their closer Relation and Alliance to us, may justly give them the advantage in our Favour, and recommend them to our Succour and Affiftance, before others, to whom we are not fo nearly allied; who have less Merit to plead, or are not fo much press'd by Necessity. To compare these Limitations with each other, and adjust exactly the Importance of them, to affign to each of them its proper weight, and fhew in what order they ought to be confider'd, might be a work of longer time, than can at present with any convenience be allotted to it. But in general we may be fure, that fuch kind of Restrictions, are clearly authorifed by that admirable rule of the Apoftle, to do good unto all men, as we have opportunity; but especially, unto them who are of the boulhould of faith *. From this confideration of the Object, proceed we in the

(2.) Second place, to state the measure of our Charity, and that is our felves; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy felf. Which Precept is explain'd by that other of our blessed

* Gal. vi. 10.

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Saviour, What soever ye would that men should do SERM. unto you, do ye even so to them*. The ex- XIX. pectations which we have from others, and our views to our own Interest, should be the Rule or Measure of our conduct towards others, and shew us, what they have reason to expect from us. This Rule indeed is not to be understood, as if we were always to expect returns in kind, from those to whom we do good Offices; or not to accept them at the Hands of others, unless we be capable of fo returning them. This were to confound the Rule of Charity, instead of stating it. The Indigent, who ask Relief, are not qualified to give it; nor are they who give it, to expect it from them. The right way is to Suppose a change of Circumstances; and then whatever good Offices they might reasonably expect from others in that change of Circumstances; the same should they be ready, at present, to perform towards them. I say, whatfoever they might reasonably expect: for if thro' a fond Principle of self Love, and a partial regard to their own Interest, they should be led to desire such kindnesses, as could not in Reason or Justice be expected; this can be no fufficient ground for their extending such Kindnesses to others, as would be alike nnreasonable and unjust. I am no way bound (for instance) to preserve my Neighbour's Health or Reputation, at the ex-

-mo Malnos aw Mat. vii, 12.

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SERM. pence of my own; for this would not be to XIX. love him as my felf, but more; and tho perhaps I might, in his Circumstances, be tempted to wish for it from another; yet I should act without Reason in so doing: and therefore such wishes, built upon no solid Foundation, can be no sufficient Rule for my behaviour at present, which ought to be

founded in the Reason of things.

Again, whilst I love my Neighbour as my self, I ought not to forget, that it is not this or that Neighbour only, but every one that has a right to my Affection. For this reason I am not allow d, in such manner to express my Kindness to any one, as may prove a prejudice to the rest. It may be, the Judge, if in the Criminal's place, would wish to be acquitted: but the publick good requires that Offenders should be punished; and whereever self Love is inordinate and unreasonable in itself; it can be no proper measure of our Love to others.

Under these Restrictions then, if we explain this Duty, of loving our Neighbour as our selves, and doing to others, as we would, they should do to us; we shall easily find it to comprize under it these several Particulars.

[1.] First, That we should be careful above all things, to do no one any injury; either by withholding from him, that which is his due, or by doing any thing to oppress and grieve him. For this, if we consult ourfelves,

felves, is the least that we expect from others, SERM. that they should leave us to the quiet enjoy—XIX. ment of our own Rights; and not busy themfelves to injure or molest us. And this will include the discharge of all those relative Duties, which others, by their station in Life, have reason to expect from us; the care of Parents for their Children; the duty of Children to their Parents; the quiet Submission and Obedience of all to their proper Governors. For whilst we are desective in these or the like Particulars, we shall not render unto all their dues, nor do what we ourselves, in their Station, should have reason to expect.

[2.] Secondly, That we should be ready to forgive and put up Injuries, when offer'd us. There may be cases, and there often are, wherein we are allow'd the use of legal Remedies. But still whilst we redress the wrong, we should love and forgive the man that did it; we should not encourage in ourselves any secret thirst or desire of Revenge; but remember, that we are to hope for Pardon of our Trespasses from God, upon no other Condition, but as we forgive them that trespass against us,

[3.] Thirdly, That we should readily embrace all convenient Opportunities of doing him good Offices, and serving him by acts of Kindness, in proportion to our station in Life, and several Abilities. We are none of us qualified by Nature, to supply our wants by

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SERM. ourselves; but we all stand in need of the XIX. Assistance and Ministry of others, to make our passage tolerable thro' this vale of Misery. From this necessity of Nature, we should learn to lend our neighbourly assistance, to such as want it; that so we may not be useless in our Generation, nor subsist by the kindness and industry of others, without making some returns of like nature, to the common Benefit.

[4.] Fourthly, That if our affistance cannot reach to every one that wants it, yet our good wishes may; and we should retain such a general Benevolence, and good Will to Men, as if we ourselves were in the place of them all, and they stood allied to us as our own Flesh. Good Wishes indeed, as we are taught by St. James, will be but a poor Manifestation of our brotherly Affection; if they are not productive of such acts of Kindness, as we have it in our power to exert: or rather, they cannot, in that case, be sincere, and without dissimulation; as the Love of our Neighbour ought certainly to be; and will be, if measured and regulated by the Love of ourselves.

[5.] Fifthly, That we should have a mutual Sympathy, or Fellow-feeling of each other's Allotments; that we should rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; and be sensibly affected with every thing that happens to them, as to Persons whom we love in like manner with our-

felves,

felves. Our sensitive Nature, no doubt, will SER M. be most easily elated or depressed by those Dif- XIX. pensations which befal ourselves, and but little touched with the Happiness or Miseries of others: But our rational Faculty will supply the Weakness of Sense; and the Energy of Grace is added to inforce and invigorate our Realon. And tho' neither of them do forbid us to be first concern'd about our own Affairs; as being more in our power, and falling more directly within the sphere of our activity; yet they do both require us to extend our Care to others, and not confume it entirely upon ourselves: since a due mixture of both is necessary to the Observation of this Precept; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. And now, after having thus far explain'd the Nature of the Duty, it will be the easier to satisfy our

3. Third enquiry, into the End of it here affign'd by the Apostle, and that is the fulfilling of the law; for all the law is fulfill'd in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self: or, as it is more briefly express'd to the same purpose, (in the Epistle to the Romans,) He that loveth another, bath

fulfilled the law. *

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The first doubt, which presents itself on this occasion, is grounded on the Infirmity of human Nature; which has so universally impair'd our Abilities, and depraved our Incli-

* Rom. xiii. 8.

nations.

SERM. nations, that it has involved us all in the Transgression of the Law: there is none that doth good, no not one; but all have finned, and fallen short of the glory of God: insomuch that if he should enter into exact Judgment with us, there should no flesh living be justified before him. It may feem from hence, a vain attempt for any one to fulfill the law, or expect to render fuch a perfect Obedience, as must suppose him to be first divested of this natural Infirmity. But this difficulty will be eaffly removed, when 'tis remembered that the Gospel requires not a legal Righteousness nor exacts perfect Obedience without any defect; it asks only for fimplicity and fincerity of Heart, which excludes all perverse and prefumptuous Disobedience; and for the weaknesses of Nature, as well as for those wilful Transgressions, which are repented of, and forfaken; it shews us an all-powerful Atonement and Satisfaction, made by him who paid a perfect Obedience. Thus, however the Law of Christ may be the same in Substance with That of Moses; (if we attend to the inward meaning and defign of Mofes;) yet if his Law be only externally confider'd, they are then widely different as to the terms of Obedience: the one could not be fulfill'd for it's Rigour and Severity; the other may undoubtedly; and that by Love.

It will however be matter of some difficulty to account, how the Love of our Neigh-

bour

bour should be called the fulfilling of the law, SERM. even in this Evangelical or Gospel Sense. XIX. The moral Law, which is renew'd and enforced under the Gospel, is known to consist of two Tables: of which the first contains the Precepts of our Duty towards God; the other of our Duty towards our Neighbour. And therefore our bleffed Saviour has mention'd the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, as the two great Commandments upon which all the Law and the Prophets did depend*. But how St. Paul came to ascribe the same excellence to That love of our Neighbour fingly, which our Saviour has mention'd as the last of the two: This may appear a difficulty which deferves to be confider'd.

And to this purpose, some may be thought perhaps to have cut the Knot, rather than untyed it; by understanding the Apostle to mean only the Duties of the fecond Table, which concern our Neighbour, and therefore are manifestly included in our Love to him. This Sense might perhaps be better adapted to that other Passage to the Romans: because the Apostle is there more particularly treating of the Duties, which we owe to one another, and enforces his Observation with this reason, Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; i. e. it fuffers us not in any respect to violate our Duty towards him; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law +. But besides that there is Matt. xxii. 37-40. 7 Rom. xiii. 10.

3 nothing

SER M. nothing in the Context to incline us to that XIX. Interpretation of the passage before us; it seems indeed to be directly excluded by the addition of the universal Article; for ALL the law is fulfill'd in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. It seems not therefore to be one part of the Law only, but the whole; not only the second Table of the Decalogue, but both, which St. Paul here declares to be summ'd up in this single Precept, and sulfilled accordingly by the Observance of it.

The difficulty then returns, to shew how the Duties of the first Table, or our Love to God, should be included and fulfilled in this love of one another. And this indeed might appear very confiderable, if we were to look upon that Love meerly as a Motion or Affection of the Mind, without regard to the Fountion or Principle from which it springs. But when we look upon it as founded in Religion; when we love our Neighbour, because he is partaker of the same Nature with ourfelves; endued with the same Powers both of Body and Mind; capable of the same Privileges or Misfortunes with ourselves; created and fustain'd by the same supreme Author and Governor of all things, and redeem'd by the Blood of the fame common Saviour; because farther we are enjoin'd it by the Authority of the supreme Lawgiver, who both in the Book of Nature and by express Revelation,

lation, has prescribed our Duty in this Par- SERM. ticular; when these are the Principles upon XIX. which our Love is founded, the love of our neighbour will include the love of God; as being an act of Obedience to his Commands, and implying the utmost Reverence for the Original, when we have such value for the Transcript, the Creature that was made after his own Image. Without these Principles it can never be that Affection which the Gospel requires; the whole Cause is requisite to the nature of Christian, as well as moral Virtue : and as That Love which arifes out of different views, cannot be the fulfilling of the whole Law, so neither indeed of any part of it; being really vicious in it's Original, and not perform'd upon Principles of true Obedience

Again, where there is first that Principle of Duty to God, This love of our neighbour will naturally follow as it's proper effect. And therefore St. John reckon'd them so inseparable, that if any Man should pretend that Love of God, without this Love of his Brother issuing from it, he would thereby be convinc'd of the grossest Absurdity and Contradiction to himself. If a man say, Ilove God, and bateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen; how can be love God, whom he hath not seen? and this commandment have we from him, that

XIX. When St. Paul therefore affirms, that all the Law is fulfilled in the Observation of this single Precept, he is no way inconsistent with our blessed Saviour, but takes this Precept in it's utmost extent, as comprehending both those great Commandments, upon which all the law, and the prophets do depend.

Such then is the Excellence of mutual Charity, that it fulfills the Law, and implies that fubjection to the will of God, in which our Liberty confifts. But it will yet appear more lovely and defirable, when we proceed to

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2. Second Argument, by which the Apolle recommends it in the Text, namely the contrary mischiefs of Enmity and Discord; But if ye bite and devour one another, take beed that

ye be not confumed one of another.

There is nothing can more certainly Conduce to the ruin of any Community than the variance and disagreement of it's Members. Whilst they are close compacted by one bond of Amity, they mutually support and add strength to one another; they unite their Councils; they exert all their Powers for the common Interest, and by a conjunction of Forces, do bassle and repel the sury of their common Enemies. But when they are disjointed by Divisions and intestine Animosites, then that Fence and Inclosure is thrown

* 1 Joh. iv. 20, 21.

down, which should secure them; there is a SERM. way laid open for the Enemies Incursions, they XIX. treacherously take part with their enemies abroad, to be revenged on those at home; or at least they weaken their own strength, and greatly diminish their power of Resistance, by banding into opposite Parties, and not leaving a force sufficient in one body, to make head against any sudden Hostilities. Nay, they even do their enemies work on one another, and blow up such coals of Contention and Strife between themselves, that, regardless of those greater evils, with which all may be oppressed, they exert the utmost of their Zeal and Industry to frustrate the defigns of one another; and instead of uniting in the love of Brethren, pursue each other with the 'Tis fo both in Ecbate of deadly Enemies. clefiaftical and Civil Broils; and unless the flame be in due time extinguished, we may fee in fuch lamentable instances the sad exemplification of our Saviour's Aphorism, that every bouse or kingdom divided against it self is brought to defolation.

But why should we dwell on the Mischiess which they do to one another; when every man becomes his own Tormentor, and unnaturally sheaths his weapon in his own Bowels? For can there be a more exquisite Torture than a Mind that meditates Malice and Revenge; that is (as the Prophet describes the wicked) like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose

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SERM. whose waters cast up mire and dirt? How is XIX. he disquieted and in perpetual Anguish, to work the Mischief of those whom he accounts his enemies! How does he pine and grieve at their contrary Successes! And how is every misfortune that befalls himself made double by the thought of its putting him still more below them! Or if matters should succeed more to his wish and expectation; yet how inhuman in itself, and withal how short is the Enjoyment of his fatisfaction! How are his fears alarmed, left the vanquished foe should rife out of his obscurity! How is his care exerted to prevent it, or to increase the Miseries he labours under! Give a man but Peace and Quiet in his own Breaft; and he is happy, whatever outward advantages he may feem to want. But deprive him of That, and all the Wealth of Honour of the universe can avail him little; his inward Uncafiness must make all things else insipid, if not nauseous To him could hel decrease the more a which has

> From the Excellence of Charity, and the Mischiefs of Division, as they have now been flated, it will be easy to account why St. Paul proposes mutual Love, as the most proper measure for the exercise of Christian Liberty; because it will engage us in that generous and easy Service of God, which is perfect Freedom, and our highest Privilege: whilst Uncharitableness would gall us with the yoke of Slavery, and expose us to the ut-

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most danger and uneafiness. And from hence SERM. alas! it will be no less easy to point out our XIX. own Unhappiness in this particular; how under the advantage of the clearest Knowledge, and the furest means to conduct us to the acknowledgment of the Truth, and practice of our Duty; we are so blinded with prejudice and partiality, as to choose out contrary ways, and judge of the merits both of Doctrines and men, not by the old Standard of Scripture and Reason; but by the new fangled maxims and tenets of a Party: how, tho' furrounded with enemies on every fide, who watch for occasions to distract and ruin us; we are yet so absurd, as to expose one another to their Rage and Fury, and give them a real advantage over all. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night*, for the unnatural strivings of a people, whose Interest as well as Duty should bind them up to Peace and Unity; who are yet so blind to the means of their own real Welfare, and have brought their Divisions at length to such maturity, that they feem ripe for that Vengeance, which was denounced against a City distinguished by its enjoyment of Favours and Privileges above all others! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are fent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a

Jer. ix. 1.

Vor. II.

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Christian Liberty to be &c. 386 SERM. ben gathereth ber chickens under ber wings, and XIX. ye would not? Behold, your house is left unto you 130 desolate . O that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are bid from thine eyes ‡ .- Ere we are thus fealed up to inexorable Vengeance, may God Almighty, of his infinite Mercy, be pleafed to shew us our Errors, and give us Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth; to heal our Divisions, and avert our Punishment, for the fake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoft, be all bonour and glory, &c. ‡ Luke xix. 42. † Mat. xxiii, 37, 38 Self Indust may be a subordinate End Thewell Us 7/1 Oconomia 472 479 Should We at rigoyee want day flat God may live line in his Church Saturfet Sine God her clu had con dyed that Man might line to i J. d. Luto Syling of god 200 mont med here - Matter four Of in the Monney or fuci fenf We aknow I Inability renews wall Meriting no i crib they This will convince the Wats that there Crea against it be an Antidot of ain't Shif's ER in S Apo A Contintion, See Costyto a consisses Jemps ral; preid on on when I an overbearing Differition on 3 A from With of One Ofterem id Me of 2 qued est omiti Manus mea Moundly in Brayer have an Eye to God; Glory Rujnolds on Hos 14 9 13 part

consistate with sproper R Interit Wilson's Sermon's 1. 17 17 4 - Rom 8/18 93 Borr au 125 on Net 11/2491. Whe Alex on Numb 14 124 22 Reynords on Recon The right Method of doing All, to the GLORY of GOD. on Po 11511 Kom 17/8 Tracts 8 Smith's Fracts 9: 407 80 1 COR. x. 31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or what soever ?. ye do, do all to the glory of God. after hindife HIS Rule of general import and con-SERM. 8 2.15 cern in the conduct of life, is inserted XX. here by the Apostle, as he draws to a conhad been disputed in the Church of Corinth, 240 118 concerning the eating of meats offered to Idols, Lefters al En). There were persons, it seems, so weak as 12.5660 to imagine, that there was fome Pollution inherent in the Meats themselves, by reason of Polhillo brees such Dedication, whilst others, from the juster our Faith 459 sense they had that these Heathen Idols had Gurn all Part ? no fuch Divinity as their Votaries vainly afcribed to them, collected, that consequently Lockyer on they had no power to vitiate or pollute those 2/01/12 Creatures of God, which were offered to them in Sacrifice. The reasoning of these last the Apostle admits to be conclusive in the general; but yet allows not its application to the present Controversy without some Distinction. as was For blandil CC2

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XX. selves had no proper or inherent Pollution; yet such might be the circumstance of eating them, as to render that action highly blameable and unworthy of a Christian. Some portions of the Victim were eaten by the Heathens in the Idol Temple; and that feasting on the Sacrifice was a constructive act of Honour to the Idol which they worshipped, and consent to their Idolatry. And fince those Idols, the dumb and unactive of themselves, were yet actuated or inhabited by Demonstand evil Spirits, who uttered from thence

ambiguous Oracles, and gave figns or answers to their Votaries; this was moreover an act of holding Communion or Fellowship with Devils; in like manner as they, who did eat of the Jewish Sacrifices, were understood to be partakers of the Altar of God; and they who eat and drink in the Christian Sacrament

of the Eucharift, are partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ.

So then, altho' an Idol were nothing, and all That which was offered in facrifice to idole were nothing; yet in regard that the things which the Gentiles facrificed, they facrificed to Devils and not to God, the feasting on such Sacrifices must consequently be interpreted as act of holding Fellowship with Devils; and was therefore most unbecoming the character of a Christian, who could not with any consistency pretend to partake of the Lords table, and of the table of Devils. This

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lution weaki many standin Est inter Epicari dicta Sepientem faceres omortas dus causa - Mos aportet diceres Sapientem mitel faceres mi causa sensas omnia

All, to the GLORY of GOD.

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This was the Resolution of the Case with SERM. respect to what was eaten in the Idol Temple. But as to those portions of the Victim, which were brought afterwards to market and fold in common with other food, the case was widely am Deas ma different. For there being plainly no inhe-jorem non har rent Pollution in the thing it felf, nor any bort for gum facrificial act at this time performed in honour of the Idol, the Christian was clearly at live hor slipson berty to eat whatsoever was thus sold in the Jie cam mayo Shambles, asking no question for conscience sake green I mehorm by no means making it a scruple of Conscionen haborel ence, whether it had ever been dedicated to quem for for an Idol or no: Being fully convinced of this out finem ... as every good Christian is and must be, that from noby the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; for home ment are the good Creatures of God; at whose hand we should receive them hand we should receive them with Praise and Too a sure los Thankfulness; and not look on them as the donce hat we gift of any Idol whatsoever. Nay, even tho sech the glory an Heathen man should invite a Christian to god when we an Entertainment, the Christian was still at the first facilities of the character of liberty to go, and eat without scruple what find the wind was fet before him, asking, again, no questiones som in tra for conscience sake,

But notwithanding this Liberty to eat, and Phil, Vivo thorough persuasion that there was no Pollution in the thing it self; yet in regard to the weakness or prejudice of other People, it might, many times, be decent for them of better understanding to abridge their Liberty, and deny

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SERM. themselves the use of what was lawful; when XX. it appear'd not to be edifying or expedient, The weaker Christians, for example, having other notions of the matter, might either be led to censure them for eating, as prophane Persons, and running into Heathen Idolatry; or elfe they might be drawn to an imitation of the fame Practice, without the fame Light and Persuasion: By which means, what was innocent in one case, would be really criminal and guilty in the other. Or the Heathens them-Telves might look upon it, as an act of Compliance, with the conceit they had of the Influence and Power of their Deities; and from thence might be the more confirm'd in their wicked Superstition. And the Jews, in the last place, must be greatly scandalized, as having the greatest Abhorrence of things offered to idols, and looking upon those who should eat of them, as the vilest of Apostates.

However then the matter were indifferent in itself, and when bought or served up as common Food, might be safely eaten without scrupulous enquiry; yet care was to be taken that they might give no Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the weaker Members of the Christian Church. And therefore, if any of these should point out to them, and declare that such Meats had been offer d in sacrifice to idols; they were then religiously to abstain: the not from any Conscience of inherent Pollution; yet out of

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a tender regard to the Infirmities of others, SERM. who had not the same Knowledge with them- XX. selves; that whilst they were free from the Reproaches of their own Breasts, they might not so misuse their Liberty, as to be judged, or exposed to the censures, of another man's conscience. For the earth, again, is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. The Bounty of Divine Providence furnished out Provisions enough besides, which might be eaten without Offence; and therefore ought to have been prefer'd to these, which were so likely to confirm some in Infidelity, and draw others to prophaneness, as well as to provoke the cenforiousness of the rest, and so to be attended on all hands with the breach of Charity. Whilst thus their behaviour should be regulated with an eye to the Edification of their Brethren, it would farther conduce, in the necessary consequence of things, to the Praise and Glory of God. And to this purpose therefore, the Apostle has applied the maxim of the Text; which may be farther extended, and refer'd to the common conduct of Life. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatfoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. I shall apply my felf accordingly, in the remainder of this Discourse,

I. To ftate or lay down that grand Point or Principle, which we should have in view, and make the ultimate Aim and End of C c 4

SERM all our Actions, viz. the glory of God. Do

XX. all to the glory of God.

II. To explain how this view may be purfued in the daily and most ordinary Actions of Life; Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do. And then

the Promotion of it; by the demeaning of ourselves, in such manner as may help to improve and edify our Brethren; and avoiding every likely occasion of Scandal or Offence.

I. FIRST then, I would propose that grand Point or Principle, which we should have in view, and make the ultimate aim and end of all our Actions; viz. the glory of God:

do all to the glory of God. And history variation

As God is the only immense, the only neceffary and felf-existent Being, the Cause, the Author and Upholder of all other Beings; posses'd himself of all possible Perfection, and the Fountain of all those several degrees of Perfection, which are conspicuous in the Creatures of his Workmanship; it follows, that all the Faculties and Powers of those his Creatures must naturally be refer'd to, and terminate in, his Praise and Glory, from whose Bounty alone they were deriv'd, and for the advancement of whose Honour, they were plainly calculated. It is thus, that the Heavens are faid to declare the glory of God, and the firmament to Shew forth bis bandywork: thus, that the invisible things of God, even his eternal Power

Power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the SERM. Creation of the World, being understood by XX. the things which he has made: thus lastly, that he is said not to have left himself without witness among all nations; in that he sendeth them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. All the Creatures in the Universe, and the most usual methods of Providence, do loudly proclaim the Existence and Perfection of their Maker and Director; and so shew forth the transcendent Excellence and Glory of his Majesty.

And if thus the Works of Nature be subservient to this End; no doubt, it must be more especially expected of reasonable Agents, that they should, in their several Orders and Capacities, be instrumental to promote it. Their natural Frame and Constitution, their Faculties and Powers, whether of Body or Mind, must needs conspire, in common with other natural Productions; and whether they will or no, ferve to illustrate and display the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the great Creator. But as they are Creatures endued with Reason and Choice, and distinguish'd by Privileges not common with the rest of the Creation, fuch as their Redemption from Sin and Milery, thro' Chrift, and the glorious hopes of an immortal Bleffedness; it is furthermore required of them, that they should, both from the nature of things, and from the Light of Revelation, learn to collect and express

SERM, express the Praises of him, who has fo spread his Mercies over all his Works, and more particularly has been pleas'd to call them out of darkness into his marvellous light. The perfection of their nature confisting in that Divine Image and Likeness wherein they were originally created, and to which, we may be still renew'd and restored by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel; it will be no less their Happiness than Duty to cultivate daily more and more the remaining footsteps of such Perfection, that so the Glory of God may be resplendent throughout all their Actions; and the Light of their Example may be made to shine in such manner before other Men, that they also may be induced to imitate them, and join in fetting forth the Glory of their Father, which is in Heaven. From hence I proceed

II. SECONDLY to explain, how this view to God's Glory may be pursued in the daily and most ordinary Actions of Life. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do; do all to

the glory of God.

How the acts of Divine Worship, and indeed the whole Catalogue of moral Virtues have a tendency to this End; there is little need to explain, because there can be no Colour to dispute it. But how the View should be constantly kept up, and the most casual and indifferent of our Actions be made subservent to it; this is the Difficulty which deserves ferves to be clear'd up, under a few Reflecti- SERM.

1. First, The most ordinary acts of Life, no doubt, should be conducted with a view to the strict Rules of Virtue, and the Commands of God. The thing will only need to be illustrated under a few Instances. Thus eating and drinking; the Examples of the Text, are as well necessary to the Support of our Being, as conducive to Delight and Satisfaction; but yet, unless kept under the Regulations of Temperance and a frugal Regard to our respective Circumstances, they may be eafily abused, to dishonour God, in the Transgreffion of his Laws, which have forbidden Luxury, and all Intemperance. So again, Sleep and Relaxation from Bufiness, intermix'd with agreeeable Conversation and oither innocent Amusements, are necessary to refresh and recreate the Spirits, and keep us from finking under those cares of Life, which might be otherwise too great to be endured: But yet, even these may be indulged till they grow into Sloth and Inactivity; and not only lose their Usefulness or Innocence, but also lead into Vices of a groffer Kind; as well by giving leifure to attend, as inclination to commit them. If we fee these Excesses, and endeavour to avoid them, out of a just Sense of Duty towards God, and that Honour he receives from our Obedience to his Laws; in That Case, our Eating and

Serm. and Drinking and common Recreations (in-XX. different, as they may feem, to vulgar and injudicious men) do grow (as it were) into acts of real Virtue, and are conducted with a

view to the glory of God. Again,

2. Secondly, the same End will be served, when these things are done, under an humble and grateful sense of the Divine Favour, in granting us the advantage and opportunity of doing them. That we have, for the purpose, ease and opportunity for Sleep, and proper Recreation, is owing to the Bounty of Divine Providence; and so is the tendency they have to our Refreshment and Recovery from all Fatigue. For this we should be thankful to that careful Providence, which watches over us for good, and makes the least considerable of its occurrences conspire to our Ease and Satisfaction. So again, the Food by which our Bodies are nourished and fuftained, is supplied by the same bounteous and kindly hand, which maketh corn to fpring out of the earth, as well as grafs to grow upon the mountains, and berb for the use of men; the same that giveth fodder unto the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon

And as it is God only, who by his gracious Providence supplies the matter of our Food; so it is he alone who can bless it to its proper use and effect, and suit it in such manner to our Frame and Constitution, that it may serve

for

for the Nutrition and Refreshment of our Bo-SERM. dies; by supplying a continual recruit of Blood XX. and Spirits, and affimilating, in just measure and proportion, to the substance of Flesh or Bone. Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It is by virtue of his Bleffing, that our Food it felf is made subservient to our use and fustenance. And from hence we see the decency and reasonableness of that Practice. which has always been observed by men of Virtue and Religion, that it be received with Thankfulness, and fanctified by Prayer; that we ought to look up for the Divine Bleffing upon what we eat, under a grateful fense that it is the God that made us, who still poureth out his benefits upon us. Whilft thus the return of every Meal, and every Diversion, is made to fill our minds, with a fresh sense of the Divine Favours; Religion will appear to be the End of all our actions; and whether we eat or drink, or what soever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. Once more,

3. Thirdly, God's Glory will be promoted by these ordinary acts of life, when we propose to use that Health and Strength (which we do hereby recover or increase) in the service of God, and the performance of our Duty towards him. The more immediate End of eating and drinking, is to satisfy the cravings of Hunger and Thirst; and the next to That is the Support of Life, and of that

Health

SERM. Health and Strength, which is requifite either XX. to its comfort or continuance. But how oftentimes is Health and Strength unnaturally abused, to dishonour him who gave it? How is it made subservient to the foulest Vices, as well to the breach of relative Justice, and Charity, as to the commission of personal Impurities? Instead of this, the man of Religion will propose to spend his life in Obedience to the Laws of God; he will go about doing good, and lay out the time and abilities which God shall give him, in making farther progress towards Perfection; in taking fit occasions to testify his love, both towards God; and his neighbour; and in cleanfing himself from all filthiness, both of the flesh and spirit.

As God then is glorified by fuch behaviour, and this is the resolved employment of that Life and Health, which is supplied or supported by our daily Food and necessary Recreations; you fee how even They may be made fubfervient to the Divine Glory, and directed to fulfill the end of our Creation. Let but our Faculties and Powers be in good earnest devoted to the Service of God, and let That be our view when we labour to continue or recruit them; and then, whether we eat or drink, or what foever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God: our ultimate aim and End will be the discharging of our Duty towards him; and fo, the Actions which feem most indifferent, will grow up into Virtues; and what might

might otherwise be charged with Partiality SERM. and Fondness for our selves, will really in XX. that case become acts of Duty, and be con-

ducted by religious Motives.

So likewise in the business of our several Callings, tho' we may reasonably propose fome Profit or Advantage to our felves; vet whilst we defign withal to be useful in that state of life wherein God has placed us, and make that very Profit subservient to so great an End, our views are still ultimately resolved into the Glory of God; which is made the dernier refort of every Undertaking, the governing motive and principle of all our Actions. How wifely then has God tempered our Duty and our Interest together, that every Action of life is capable of being made religious, and every Meal an act of real Worthip! Thus Nature it self will be converted into Grace: our regards to ourselves will terminate in God, and the discharging of our Duty towards him: and when we feem most of all to be consulting the Support of our Bodies, we shall really promote the Salvation of our Souls.

Not that we are to suppose our selves obliged, to have God's Glory directly in our thoughts, throughout every moment, and upon every occasion that occurs in life! The frailty of our nature will not admit of such perpetual and uninterrupted Contemplation: Nor would it consist with our attending to that

SERM. that variety of Duty, God has called us to discharge. It may suffice therefore, that we have first formed our Purposes and Resolutions of living, with a strict regard to our Duty, and the Glory of God, in the performance of it; and afterwards, that we take frequent occasions to renew and recollect Them, From hence, we shall be habitually disposed, in the frame and temper of our minds, to pursue that great End of our Religion : and then, the several actions of our lives will be but (as it were) the exemplifications of that habit of mind, and properly conducted by it; altho' we should not, at every turn, have it actually in our thoughts, what may be the whole tendency and refult of them.

After this general account, how the ordinary acts of life may be directed to the Glory

of God, it will be proper in the,

III. THIRD place, to speak something more particularly of the Promotion of it; by the demeaning of our selves in such manner, as may help to improve and edify our Brethren; and by avoiding every likely occasion of Scandal or Offence.

For this is the Point which the Apostle had directly in view. He had granted the indifference of all meats, even tho' they had been offered in Sacrifice to Idols; provided they were not eaten in the Idol Temple as a sacrificial Banquet; but only set before them, at a common Entertainment. Yet, in regard the weak-

weakness of some men was such, that they SERM. had not judgment enough to distinguish Cases, XX. and reason nicely about the nature of inherent Pollution; it could not but become those of a better Capacity, to stoop a little to their weakness; and rather to abridge somewhat of their own Liberty, than either to provoke their Censure, or by a mistaken example, seduce them to do that, of which their Conscience was not satisfied: according to that noble Resolution of the Apostle in the case:

Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no sless while the world standeth, less I make my brother to offend.

The Rule which is mentioned upon this occasion, will be justly applicable to the exercise of Liberty, in any other matters of indifferent nature; where the prejudice of weaker Judgments shall occasion the practice on one side to be mischievous by accident, tho' it be not otherwise unlawful in it self. Only the Rule must be taken under two restrictions, lest it be abused to mislead us into Error, instead of

conducting us aright: viz.

postle treats of; not only indifferent in its own nature; but lest in that indifference by our Superiors: for our Liberty may be restrained by the intervention of Authority; so that the things which are indifferent in themselves, may be not indifferent to us, when sete ld and determined by them who have the right of deciding Vol. II. D d

SERM, ing in such cases; the Duty of Obedience to XX. lawful Government, being ever of an higher Obligation, than that of stooping to the weakness of mistaken Brethren.

2. That by studying to avoid Offence or Scandal on one side, we do not draw on Censure and Reproaches on the other; for in many cases it may so happen, that there are weak Brethren on both sides the question: and then there will be need of great prudence and caution, so to steer between them, as to offend neither; or if that be utterly impossible, then rather to incline to them who are nearest in their Judgment to the truth of things.

Under these Restrictions if we use our Liberty, without giving Offence to weaker Brethren, whether in eating or drinking, or other things of an indifferent kind, we shall do it to the glory of God, who esteems his Honour to be nearly concerned in that regard we shew for the Edification and Improvement of other men; and that upon the three following ac-

counts: namely,

1. First, As it is an act of Charity. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. A sense
of superior Knowledge and Abilities may be
in danger of leading us to despise those whose
Attainments appear to be inserior. But it is
not the Property of Christian Love or Charity
to be so puffed up: That vaunteth not it self,
neither behaves it self unseemly, but looks
upon the weakest of Christians under the

character of Brethren, for whom Christ died, SERM. as well as for the strong; and whom there- XX. fore, after his Example, we should learn to honour and labour to improve. From hence it is induced to bear all things and endure all things, and even to deny it self those Liberties which might otherwise be lawful, when in regard of fuch our Brethren, they shall appear to be inexpedient, because they edify not. Since then the Divine Glory is promoted by nothing more than by the Love of Brethren, which is made the very Characteristick of Christ's Disciples, and declared to be the fulfilling of the Law of God; you fee how it evidently follows, that this study to avoid Scandal, which is so plainly the effect of that brotherly Love or Charity, must needs conduce, in the necessary iffue and refult of things, to promote the Glory of God. Again,

2. Secondly, As it sets forward the Salvation of other men, it is still subservient to the fame End. The Scandal that is given to weak Brethren, is apt many times to lead them to uncharitable Censures, and sometimes to an imitation of that Practice which their own Judgment reckons to be finful. Thus (as the Apostle speaks) their conscience being weak is defiled. Tho' the matter in it felf be truly lawful, yet they do it under a fense of Guilt, and therefore must be answerable for it in the fight of God. And in fuch woful

D d 2

SERM. woful instances, That comes to pass, which the Apostle laments; that the weak brother is made to perish, for whom Christ died. But on the other hand, by stooping to their Infirmities, and carefully avoiding every matter of Offence; they will be greatly edified and confirmed in their Religion, and excited to perfevere in their Duty, with greater chearfulness, and an increase of Charity. As then the glory of God is manifested and set forth in the Salvation of men; there can be no doubt but this charitable condescension, which is so plainly calculated to promote the one, must in proportion heighten and display the other. Once more,

3. Thirdly, As fuch compassionate Deportment will incline spectators to admire our Religion, and honour the God whom we profess to worship; it is farther instrumental to advance the Praise and Glory of God. That God is glorified by the Obedience of his Saints; and particularly in the inflances of Meekness and Charity and brotherly Affection, cannot be disputed: And This, not only whilft they are confidered as personal Virtues, wherein they have themselves been duly exercifed; but more especially as those Virtues have been made exemplary, and Patterns of good Works to other men; that they also may be induced to follow fuch Examples, and glorify our Father which is in beaven.

To conclude, there will be little danger SERM. of our failing in this article of Scandal, if we XX. be but careful to observe what was advised under the SECOND Head of Discourse, that all the most indifferent Actions of our lives should be conducted with a view to this great End of Religion. Let but an earnest Piety be fixed within; Let God have our Heart, and the fovereign Rule of our Affections; and then, as the Principle of natural life is with the blood dispersed throughout the whole body, so will this inward and spiritual Principle be fure to diffuse it self throughout Hurra glor the whole man, and spread thro' the whole course of his Behaviour; then will every Faculty and every Power receive fuch a deep tincture of Religion, that all the Actions of our lives cannot but favour of it, the Love of God and of Brethren will be always thought upon and always purfued; so that whether we eat or drink, or whatfoever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. And thus may God be glorified in all things thro' Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoft, be all honour and glory, now and benceforth for evermore. Amen.

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